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CORRESPONDENCE

Getting it right

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: I have just read the editorial in your issue of January 15 ["Live & Let Live"]. It raises the right issues and sets the right tone. Congratulations.

FRANK J. MACCHIAROLA

The writer is dean of the Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University and a former chancellor of the New York City school system.

The price of evasion

Orlando, Fla.

To the Editors: I am a diocesan communications director with direct and recent experience of handling the public aspects of several incidents of sexual abuse by the clergy. I want to add a thought to the conversation about confidentiality in these types of cases ["Priests & Sex," November 20, 1992; Correspondence, January 15 & February 12, 1993].

The reason so many victims felt they had to go public was their perception that the official church was not taking their accusations seriously. The denial by the institution was the first and most formidable obstacle many victims faced. It was often only after repeated efforts to get some response from officialdom that they resorted to our society's communal laundromat, the media.

A very real credibility gap does exist between the public and the Catholic church in the arena of clerical sexual abuse. While in the long term the "outing" of the problem will prove to be the healthiest of interventions, we will continue to suffer from the results of our past denial and cover-ups. The family alcoholic or the family abuser may proclaim reformations, but for family members it is only new behavior that will heal the lack of trust.

It is the same for the church. There is a great need for reassurance for the victims, the victims' families, and for the public at large. They will need to hear out loud, and more than once, that church leaders are indeed being responsible.

When the media (or concerned people outside the media) ask questions, the choice of response is not limited to "no comment," on the one hand, and on the other the revealing of the identities of victims and accused. The posing of such questions creates a very real opportunity to reassure the public that policies are in place, that the incidents are being handled by responsible people, and that there are opportunities for people to air their larger concerns in a safe and pastoral environment. We need to say it publicly and then do it, over and over again; this is the price we pay for past evasions. I would suggest that this is a more productive and healing response than a consistent "no comment." It is not the fault of the media that "no comment" has come to be translated "cover-up" in the minds of people who have come face to face with the frustrating and impenetrable mask of secrecy which, in these cases, seems to cover otherwise pastoral faces.

People understand sickness; what they cannot accept is the institutional secrecy which makes them feel invisible. In the Catholic church we are finally realizing this when it comes to victims and their families. We need to extend that new wisdom to the larger public, within and outside the church family.

CAROL STANTON

Correction Because of an editing error, the meaning of a sentence in Luke Timothy Johnson's review/essay "Something Fundamental Is Afoot" [January 29] was changed. The sentence, which appears in the third column on page 19, should have read: "The essayists in *Speaking the Christian God* worried about feminists' 'panentheism,' but as Johnson shows, some version of that understanding of God's revelation to the world underlies a great deal of the very best Roman Catholic theology of this century."

THE EDITORS

Gays in the military

Piedmont, Calif.

To the Editors: David R. Carlin, Jr., writes ["Bishops & Generals," January 15] that the real reason military leaders do not want openly gay and lesbian people admitted to the armed services is that those pushing for this change of policy are not committed to the good of the institution, as the generals are, but are advocating change because they have a "profound personal commitment to promoting and defending what they conceive to be the rights of gays and lesbians." This commitment, he says, reflects the gay movement's philosophy of "radical individualism," which makes them indifferent to the good of institutions; in Carlin's terms, "they could care less" about the well-being of the military as an institution. These views, in my opinion, ignore relevant facts and rest on unproved assumptions.

Gays and lesbians, as everyone knows, are now serving in the armed forces, even though, if their orientation becomes known, they are automatically subject to dishonorable discharge, with its long-term negative consequences. Why would people take such risks and suffer the mental anguish of living duplicitous lives if they did not sincerely want to be part of the institution? Why

(Continued on page 30)

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, Ohio 44691. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional offices. Copyright © 1993 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $36; Canada, $39; foreign, $41. Special two-year rate: U.S. $62; Canada, $66; foreign, $72. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

Illustrations: Cover, Emil Antonucci; pp. 7, 20, Paul Valerry; pp. 10, 14, 22, Baloo, Rothco; pp. 11, 21, Ross, Rothco; pp. 26, 27, Punch, Rothco; p. 29, Jean Charlot.

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COMMONWEAL

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STAFF

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Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly except Christmas/New Year's; and monthly July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038. Telephone: (212) 732-0800. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Ruth E. Taylor, 11 Graffam Rd., So. Portland, Me. 04106 (207) 799-4387, classified advertising correspondence to 15 Dutch St. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 15 Dutch St. New York, N.Y. 10038.

Stay focused

President Bill Clinton has at last focused his attention where his campaign manager, Mr. James Carville, famously pointed: "It's the economy, stupid." Time to "face the facts," Mr. Clinton urged in the pre-sell to his State of the Union message. This looks like focus after the new administration's rocky start. The economy is why Clinton beat George Bush. But if Clinton is to carry out the major tax, fiscal, and economic adjustments he calls for and convince Congress and the country to support him, it is on the economy that he must remain focused.

It is the economy. But it is more than that. To wit: the nation's sense of well-being—really the lack of it—and the unease most Americans feel about the future. Though the reference point is the economy, the real anxieties are both larger and more practical: they are about jobs now and jobs for our children in the future, about education and the ability of younger Americans to become productive workers, about the social fabric that nurtures children and sustains families, neighborhoods, and whole communities. Beneath all of this lies a gnawing apprehension of the ways in which crime, violence, drugs, teen-age pregnancies, single-parent families, unemployment, and welfare dependency corrode the sense of solidarity that knits the social fabric together.

Republicans believed that what was wrong with this country was the decline of personal virtue and the loss in individuals of a sense of social responsibility. The Democrats believed the problem was unemployment, a declining job and wage base, failing urban centers, and a maldistribution of the country's resources. Clinton's inaugural rhetoric of shared responsibility, now repeated in his economic plan, sounds good. Yet just because the Democrats trumped the Republicans on the economic issues doesn't mean that Clinton can proceed to act as if the Republicans were voted down on the sociocultural issues. Personal responsibility for self and others, and the lack thereof, is precisely what is eating at the national soul and what many—yes, even some Democrats—believe lies at the heart of our economic disequilibrium. Let us quickly add, not just the poor but the rich and the middle class as well; the old perhaps more than the young.

If, because of pressing the sociocultural agenda of the Democratic party's left wing, Clinton looses his leverage to address domestic and economic issues, it is not just the Democratic party that will lose, but all those eager to narrow the gap between the haves, the former-haves, and the never-have-hads.

Clinton was not elected to realign America's cultural values toward the cultural left. Gay rights, abortion, affirmative action are among the flash points in America's culture wars. In each instance Mr. Clinton defends his actions—liberalizing abortion regulations, lifting the ban on homosexuals in the military, proceeding with fetal tissue research, insisting on a woman for attorney general—by a narrow def-

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inition of what is at issue, but seems oblivious to the serious, reasonable, and contrary views of his fellow citizens. (Boston's Mayor Raymond Flynn raises some below on the abortion issue.)

On fetal tissue research, Mr. Clinton gives no evidence of comprehending its larger consequences. Abortion proponents defend it on the grounds that if it's good for abortion, it's good. But when the issue first surfaced in the early seventies, fetal tissue research was about human experimentation, informed consent, and exploitation of poor women; such research now includes many other complex issues (*Commonweal*, editorial, June 19, 1992) that bear sharper scrutiny than Mr. Clinton cares to give it.

On gay rights Mr. Clinton argues that since, in fact, gays already serve in the military, the effect of the ban is simply to dismiss people who are found out. Barring gays and dismissing them is a form of job discrimination, which is wrong. In that respect the ban is wrong. Mr. Clinton is right on this narrow point. Yet military life is more than a job, it is a way of life. The further study urged by Senator Nunn and the joint chiefs makes sense. Mr. Clinton insists that status and behavior are two different things and believes that a rigorous code of sexual conduct for both heterosexuals and homosexuals in the military will maintain that distinction. We think he is naive about the rights cases that will follow and make their way to the courts (as one gay activist responded to this line of argument: we don't come out of the closet in order to remain celibates).

On cabinet quotas, it is true that a balanced ticket has a long and worthy political tradition expressive of solid party discipline; the Democrats once successfully ran several cities based on that fine art. No reason a presidential cabinet cannot be a species of the balanced ticket, except that: first, you don't announce that's what you're doing; second, proponents of particular job candidates don't go public, even anonymously (a good rule of thumb used to be: you talk, you're out); third and obviously, it isn't balanced if they're all lawyers no matter their gender or shade; and fourth, insisting on a particular kind of person for a job is not balance, but a form of obsessive behavior. And yes, we think on the failure of two potential attorney generals, Mr. Carville was right again: "Maybe God is punishing us for not picking someone with a normal name, like Mary, Susan, or Elizabeth." Janet seems like a reasonable compromise.

The cultural values that have divided the Democratic party since McGovern continue. If Mr. Clinton hopes to rebuild the nation's morale and restore a sense of trust in the government's ability to solve at least some problems in a fair and efficient way, he cannot become an advocate for cultural values about which the country is likely to remain in deep and durable conflict.

Mr. Clinton, make them rare

Growing up the son of a dockworker and cleaning woman, Catholic social teachings on the respect and dignity of a job and on the rights of workers meant a lot in my home. This social philosophy inspired many sons and daughters of Catholic working people to work for social justice, care for the sick, the hungry and the homeless, and help build strong families and communities.

For the past twelve years, we have seen complete abandonment by Washington of working families, the needy, and urban communities. As president of the United States Conference of Mayors this past year, I have seen a total lack of any concern for America's cities and their people by the White House.

I played a very active role in the Clinton campaign as national campaign co-chairman, because I, like many Catholics, feel that President Clinton will lead and unite the country on the common ground of social and economic justice. It is especially important that the president hear the voices raised in concern by a significant part of the coalition that was a deciding influence in his election.

During the campaign, President Clinton stated that his position on abortion was to make abortions safe, legal, and rare. By his actions last week, he has moved to make them safe and legal, but what will he do to make abortions rare? The United States has perhaps the worst record in the industrial world of support for women during and after pregnancy. What will President Clinton do to enhance support for prenatal and postnatal care for women and children?

RAYMOND L. FLYNN

Raymond L. Flynn is the mayor of Boston. His statement was released on January 26, 1993.

AN EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

GAYS, LESBIANS & SOCIETY

SPEAKING OF ASSUMPTIONS

The struggle over admitting self-acknowledged homosexuals into the armed services has something to do with the nature of the military but a lot more with the nature of homosexuality. It strikes me as a battle over assumptions: whether homosexuality is chosen or discovered; whether it can and should be "cured"; whether gays are predatory recruiters for their "lifestyle"; whether it's sound public policy to enact statutory protections of gay and lesbian rights in housing, employment, inheritance law, admission to the military, etc., and thereby to foster greater tolerance and, eventually, social acceptance of homosexuality; whether gays and lesbians can be good parents; whether the notion of same-sex marriage cheapens and undercuts or compliments and complements the male-female variety; whether the effect of the gay sensibility on politics, family

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life, theater, films, the arts in general is malevolent or positive, or both, or neither; whether, psychologically, homosexuality is an aberration, a basic flaw, or simply a difference; whether, morally and ethically, homosexual love-making—men lying with men, women with women—is perverse, repulsive, evil, or merely a sexual variant, in itself neither better nor worse than heterosexuality; and, finally, whether the belief that homosexuality is of its very nature a social disvalue, a psychological aberration, and a moral evil is founded on sound, time-tested personal and social values or is rooted in inherited bias, personal ignorance, and/or homophobic fear.

I speak of "assumptions" in that 205-word sentence because, in my judgment, there is no evidence on either side of any of these issues so compelling that it will simply overwhelm the opposition, shaming them into silence. The experts, including ethicists, moral theologians, and biblical exegetes as well as psychiatrists, anthropologists, and sociologists, differ. Since we're all sexed, we all have a stake in the matter—and a limited perspective. The tactics of victimization and political correctness, used on behalf of homosexuals, can influence the judgments even of professionals. The depth of conviction among anti-gay advocates, and their sheer numbers, have considerable impact that is similarly unrelated to the force of their arguments.

In any case, this issue will be settled (if it's ever settled) not by experts but by amateurs: the rest of us. It follows that we should all try (repeat: *try*) to be upfront about the sources for our conclusions. My own reasons for coming down on the gay side are several. First, because of my life experience my knees tend to jerk toward the liberal side of most issues; I was a Depression child, my mother was strongly devoted to FDR and the New Deal, and I was orphaned at twelve, therefore an underdog in life's struggle and a sympathizer with underdogs. Second, I had a few fumbling homosexual experiences in my boys' boarding school. I'm sure I mentioned them in confession but they were neither repulsive at the time nor devastating in the aftermath. Third, like most New Yorkers I have gay and lesbian friends and neighbors, and far from being predatory monsters, aberrant, sex-mad, weak-willed, or poor citizens, they're admirable people. Anything negative anyone says about homosexuals in general I apply to these people in particular, and I get mad. Unscientific, yes, but I note that whereas in a mid-January *New York Times*/CBS poll only 42 percent of all adults surveyed favored permitting homosexuals to serve in the military, 69 percent of respondents with a gay relative or friend took that position. Is that bias? Or knowledge?

Finally, however, this is an issue of justice. Homosexuals stand at the bar accused as a group of being a corrupting influence in society, a threat to the effectiveness of the military, underminers of family values, dangerous role models for children. There are arguments and anecdotal evidence for such views. I think that the arguments can be refuted and that the evidence to the contrary is a great deal stronger. But that's just my opinion, which has never been taken as definitive. The point is that in this dispute, as in the case of any defendant charged with any kind of antisocial behavior, the burden lies with the prosecution. In the absence of proof beyond a reasonable doubt, it is radically unfair to continue heaping disabilities and disadvantages (not to speak of contempt and obloquy) upon a whole class of people who are asking nothing more than equal treatment for themselves as persons.

ROBERT G. HOYT

REPORT ON JAPAN

TO ARM OR NOT TO ARM...

RETHINKING THE CONSTITUTION

Despite Japan's reputed aversion to military matters, its troops have slowly but steadily been built up so that they now constitute one of the world's ten strongest armed forces. The reality of postwar Japan has been that, while leaving its American-imposed "peace" constitution intact and publicly adhering to the idea of an unarmed country, the government of the ruling Liberal Democratic party (LDP) has, in fact, been overseeing a gradual transition to a significantly armed nation with looser interpretations of the 1947 constitution.

Japanese militarism and the quest for imperial expansion that led to World War II failed so completely that the Japanese enthusiastically embraced the concept of pacifism, by which they understand a world in which military power plays no role in domestic and foreign affairs. This "passive pacifism," along with Japan's postwar constitution, offered a defeated Japan under the leadership of Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida (1946-47, 1948-52), the opportunity to limit political commitments abroad so that it could devote itself exclusively to the pursuit of domestic economic reconstruction and development.

Keeping the brakes on expansion of military capabilities has seemingly been a matter of national consensus and every postwar prime minister has publicly distanced himself from expanding military power. Yet, throughout the twentieth century Japan has felt a strong sense of isolation, heightened by a feeling of uniqueness. Up to the end of World War II this was characterized by a fervent nationalism fed by state Shinto and reverence for the emperor. Since then, "one country pacifism," as the Japanese describe their foreign policy, has led some Japanese to conclude that their stance keeps them on the fringes of mainstream international dialogue.

Japan's democratic structure, with its civilian control over the military, minimizes the chances of an extreme shift toward a greater military role in government. Still, incremental changes over the past four decades have now brought Japan to the brink of abandoning "one country pacifism" for what many Japanese leaders see as the status of a "normal" nation-state. That is, a country that can freely use all of the traditional means—diplomatic, economic, *and* military—to pursue its interests.

In fact, foreign pressure, or *gaiatsu*, has provided the rationale for an expanding military capability since the Korean War.

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Earlier arguments in favor of a stronger military focused solely on the need to defend Japan from internal and external threats. By the mid-1980s, however, Japan's economic expansion had become something of a political liability in international circles, leading proponents of a defense buildup to further seek to address Japan's "international responsibilities," culminating most recently with the dispatch of 700 troops to Cambodia as part of a UN peacekeeping force.

Japan's unique position in the world as an economic giant that avoids military entanglements has come under particular scrutiny over the past few years. The issue has been whether the Yoshida Doctrine has left Japan ill-prepared politically and institutionally to deal with the demands now placed upon it. The Persian Gulf War, in particular, raised a number of difficult questions regarding U.S.-Japan relations, the role of Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF), and the challenging issue of constitutional interpretation. The last has been the central point of debate in the ongoing struggle between the ruling Liberal Democratic party, which has governed Japan for virtually all of the last four decades, and the opposition parties.

The LDP was able to pass last year's peacekeeping law that allows SDF troops to participate in overseas UN peacekeeping operations largely because of a powerful public relations campaign by the government in an effort, as one official put it, "to educate people a bit more." The debate focused on the question of whether or not participation in collective security, even peacekeeping, is barred under Japan's constitution. After nearly two years of grueling national debate, Japanese forces are now allowed to play a limited role in UN peacekeeping operations. Japanese military units currently in Cambodia have thus far been assigned only to rebuilding roads, bridges, and hospitals, and they are not allowed to engage in combat.

Nevertheless, some members of the ruling party would like to see Japan participate fully in future multinational operations such as the Gulf War, although this would likely require revision or further reinterpretation of the constitution. They argue that continuing Japan's pacifist uniqueness serves only to perpetuate residual guilt from World War II indefinitely.

The subject of the Japanese military is still a delicate one both in Japan and abroad. A Japanese military officer was fired last year after writing a magazine article contending that the only way to correct the "injustices" of influence-peddling and corruption in Japanese politics was through "a *coup d'état* or a revolution." Japan's defense agency director has publicly urged the United States to remain militarily involved in Asia to "block Japan from re-emerging as a major militarist state." Even the word for patriotism, *aikokushin*, still reminds many older Japanese of the fervent nationalism of the first half of this century.

Nonetheless, although the majority of Japanese staunchly support their constitution which "forever renounce[s] war," there are signs of quiet resignation that their nation must assume a greater share of international obligations. Unlike 1960, when large numbers of Japanese turned out in demonstration against the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, there were but scattered protests against last year's peacekeeping law.

Japan now has two options. It could become a more "normal" nation-state, which includes a greater capacity for the SDF. Or it could opt for the more challenging position as a leading peacemaker through environmental protection, economic aid, and refugee relief. Which course should the Japanese be encouraged to take? Japan deserves credit for the financial and diplomatic contributions it has made to international society and should be invited to continue to do so. In my view, it would be a mistake, however, to push the Japanese into assuming more of the military burden for settling disputes. The international outcry over the recent Japanese shipment of plutonium from Europe is an unfortunate reminder that Japan is still viewed with suspicion, especially in Asia. This is further illustrated by Asian pleas for the U.S. to remain militarily engaged in the region to prevent any additional rearming of Japan. A Japan that is perceived by its neighbors as acting independently, especially without the hedge of America's presence, will foster instability in Asia and the Pacific as other nations seek to expand their military capacity.

Given the unique opportunity presented by the end of the cold war, there are a great many ways—technological, scientific, and financial—that Japan could contribute to global peace that are consistent with its pacifist constitution. But it is also important for Japanese to play a more visible role in aiding third-world nations beyond the scope of overseas development assistance, which always carries the stigma of leading to expanded business opportunities for Japanese companies. Finally, it is important to bring the pacifist ideals of Japan's constitution into the mainstream of international dialogue. But to be a successful model, the people of Japan will have to demonstrate that their rejection of militarism is real, rather than a convenient disguise for apathy, requiring greater civilian participation in crisis areas where humanitarian efforts are most needed.

ROBERT J. CARRARO

Robert J. Carraro, a former journalist, is an officer of The Asia Foundation's Center for Asian Pacific Affairs in Washington, D.C. The views expressed here are his own.

REPORT ON ECUMENISM

A GLITCH OR A GULF?

CANTERBURY, ROME & REUNION

The relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic church can now be most accurately described as R.I.P., meaning:

- ☐ Rest In Peace.
- ☐ Running In Place.
- ☐ Rich In Possibility. (Check One.)

Certainly the next millennium's historians will consider December 1991-December 1992 a critical year in Anglican-Roman Catholic relations. In December 1991 the long-await-

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ed Vatican response to the 1982 final report of the first Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC I) was published. Unlike the Anglican bishops at Lambeth in 1988, the Vatican did not endorse the commission's claim to have reached substantial agreement on the Eucharist and ordained ministry, as well as a convergence on the issue of authority in the church. Instead, the Vatican found only "progress toward consensus." In 1991, ARCIC I's work was deemed mistaken. It had not discovered a unity of faith after all.

The shock waves from the Vatican's response had hardly subsided when the second blow fell. On November 11, 1992, the mother church of the Anglican Communion, the Church of England, voted by a narrow margin to ordain women to the priesthood. The Vatican's reaction to the decision was swift and brutally frank: "This decision by the Anglican Communion constitutes a new and grave obstacle to the entire process of reconciliation."

Understandably, these events have led some to pronounce a "Rest In Peace" over efforts at reunification. At this juncture, what realistic hope for future progress can there be? Shouldn't the talent on both sides be expended in more promising and productive ways?

Others feel that Rome and Canterbury have been reduced to "Running In Place." The formal international and national dialogues will continue, but only to save face. Neither side wants to bear history's blame for walking away from the table. But, these conversations will be an expensive and elaborate charade since the Vatican's response to the final report and the Anglican ordination vote have killed any realistic hopes for reunion.

Still, there are reasons for thinking that the correct R.I.P. to be pronounced here is "Rich In Possibility." Although the Vatican reaction to the ordination vote seems harsh and uncompromising, it is not surprising. Indeed, it is nearly identical to Pope Paul VI's reaction seventeen years ago when Donald Coggan, then archbishop of Canterbury, had written to him about the prospect of ordaining women in the Anglican Communion. Paul VI responded that this would create an "element of grave difficulty." A year later, in another letter to Coggan, the pope referred to the initiative as "so grave a new obstacle and threat." In each letter, however, Paul VI concluded that this decision by the Anglicans would not destroy the relationship nor hinder the commitment to work toward reunion. More recently, in May 1992, Pope John Paul II reiterated the same position to Archbishop Carey, but also agreed on the necessity for further study of this question. *Roma locuta est—sed causa non finita.*

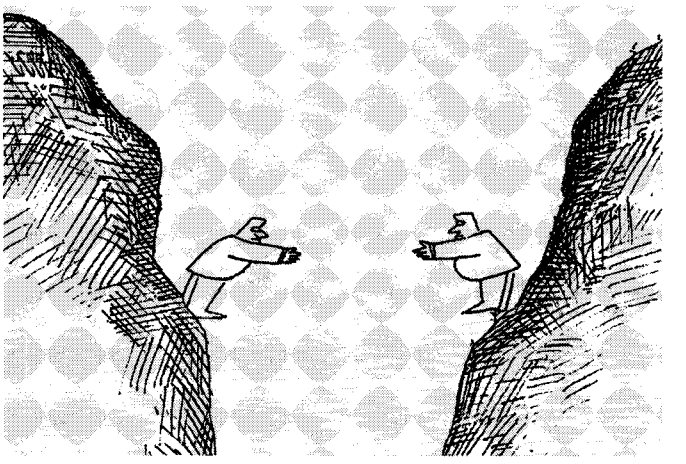
In other words, Rome's recent reaction signals no change in the status quo which has held since 1975. For seventeen years, this "grave obstacle" has not prevented progress on other fronts (e.g., ARCIC II's 1991 statement, "Church as Communion," the 1990 study of ARC-USA on Anglican orders) and there is no reason to think that it might do so now.

Admittedly, the official Vatican response to the final report increases difficulties. Even Archbishop Carey worried about the possibility of further progress if the Vatican did not abandoned its present methodology. While there is room for concern, there are also reasons to think that the impact of the Vatican's response to the final report will be minor and brief. It is the result of collaboration between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). The procedures established in the apostolic constitution of 1988, *Pastor bonus*, made the CDF the dominant partner in this work because it has final responsibility in doctrinal matters. I would argue, however, that the CDF either does not understand or does not accept the methodology used by ARCIC I. John Paul II himself summarized those methods in addressing the commission in 1980: "Your method has been to go behind the habit of thought and expression born and nourished in enmity and controversy, to scrutinize together the great common treasure, to clothe it in a language at once traditional and expressive of the insights of an age which no longer glories in strife but seeks to come together in listening to the quiet voice of the Spirit."

Francis Sullivan, S.J. (*Bulletin of the Centro pro Unione,* Fall-Spring 1991-92), argues that ARCIC I was inspired by Pope John XXIII in his opening speech to Vatican II: "The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another," and the implication that "various theological formulations are often to be considered complementary rather than conflicting" (*see* "Decree on Ecumenism," *Unitatis redintegratio*, 17).

Yet the Vatican's response never refers to the method of "going behind...expression[s]...nourished in enmity and controversy." Instead, it faults the report for ambiguities. These ambiguities have to be clarified not by developing a more precise common language but, apparently, by using Roman Catholic terminology like "propitiatory sacrifice," "substantial change," and "the character of priestly ordination." This approach has obvious, if not fatal limitations. Indeed, the response fails to answer the question of whether the ARCIC agreements are "consonant with the faith of the Catholic church." Instead, it merely demonstrates the obvious: specifically Roman Catholic (or Anglican, for that matter) language is not used to express the agreements which ARCIC I discovered.

And there are other oversights. When the final report was issued in 1982, a worldwide process of assessment began in the Anglican Communion. Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, then president of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, also asked



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Roman Catholic episcopal conferences to evaluate it. But there is little evidence in the response that the bishops' work was heeded or used. Such a consultation was not required and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's failure to draw upon it does not invalidate the response as the church's present official position. Still, how influential and persuasive can it be when it ignores the thinking and sentiment of the bishops? How much credibility can it have when it sets aside the wisdom of the bishops of England and Wales who are most familiar with Anglicans?

Worse, the authors of the response themselves seem to lack first-hand familiarity with Anglican life and worship. This is a serious deficiency. Words and deeds, not words alone, reveal what Anglicans—and all other Christians, too—believe about the Eucharist, ordained ministry, and church authority. Sadly, Rome now conveys little longing for reunion, little sorrow over the continuing division. Its gratitude for ARCIC I's work is perfunctory. It takes an unnecessarily negative tone by underlining remaining differences, which the commission had already noted. It even insinuates that there are far more massive roadblocks on the journey than previously envisioned.

The response repeatedly finds the final report falling short of "Catholic doctrine" or "Catholic faith," but it does not exploit the fact that even doctrinal differences need not stand in the way of unity. It ignores Vatican II's injunction: "In comparing doctrines, let them [Catholic theologians] remember the existence of the order or 'hierarchy' of truths of Catholic doctrine, since they vary with respect to their connection to the foundation of Christian faith" ("Decree on Ecumenism," *Unitatis redintegratio*, 11). How influential can an "official response" of the Roman Catholic church hope to be when it overlooks precisely what Vatican II mandated its theologians to take into account?

Finally, Francis Sullivan's discovery that the response quotes the final report inaccurately no less than seventeen times makes the anomaly inescapable. What is presented as the official position of the Roman Catholic church may actually express a minority position within the church. We might be able to gauge the long-range impact of the Vatican's response by comparing it to *Inter insigniores* (1976), the "Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood." The defects of *Inter insigniores* became apparent soon after it appeared. While it still holds a strong official position, most theologians, nevertheless, consider it intellectually shoddy and unconvincing. Even bishops have declared publicly that its arguments are not persuasive. Not only did it fail to squelch discussion of the ordination of women within the Roman Catholic church, but today the issue is more alive than ever. As a former archbishop of Canterbury said, the ordination of women is not an issue between our two churches but within them. Just as *Inter insigniores* has not controlled the discussion about ordaining women, neither will the response to the final report control, much less derail, the Anglican-Roman Catholic journey to reunion.

Obviously, this past year has been a stressful one for Anglicans and Roman Catholics eager for the day when their churches embrace one another again. John Henry Newman, who belongs to us both, said that a thousand difficulties do not make a doubt. We can still say that two, ten, and even a hundred obstacles do not obliterate the possibilities that still constitute our common task and hope. Canterbury and Rome? R.I.P. (Rich In Possibility—Still!)

JON NILSON

John Nilson teaches in the theology department at Loyola University of Chicago.

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

THEY CALL THEMSELVES LIBERALS

BAH, HUMBUG

About a century ago William James delivered a lecture titled, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings." Nowadays somebody ought to give a lecture called, "On a Certain Blindness in Liberals, Especially Liberal Columnists."

Different people find different things to be appalled at in the current controversy about homosexuals in the military. But what appalls me is the abysmal ignorance—or better, the abysmal lack of curiosity—which the cultural Left in general has exhibited regarding the motives of their opponents.

Let Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times* stand for the rest. In his January 29 column, Lewis revealed what motivates the opposition to President Bill Clinton's proposal to lift the ban against gays and lesbians in the military: bigotry. That's it. That's the whole story—the beginning, the middle, and the end. According to the profound and well-researched psychology of Mr. Lewis, bigotry is the opposition's one and only motive.

I don't mean to single out Lewis, who is ordinarily an intelligent commentator on affairs of the day. What he said is what the entire cultural Left has been saying for the last month or so. The fight to admit gays to the military, they assure us, is a fight against bigotry, a fight on all fours with the battle against racial prejudice and discrimination. All opposition is totally irrational, and it deserves to be greeted not with dialogue but with denunciation.

Now this is blindness; the kind of blindness liberals specialize in accusing others of; the kind they say someone is suffering from who doesn't understand, for example, what it is like to live as a homosexual in American society. It is a voluntary blindness, a moral blindness: the refusal to see things from the other

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fellow's point of view.

Speaking of the other fellow's point of view, I wonder if Lewis and the others have ever actually talked with someone whose opposition to homosexual conduct is religiously based? Have they talked with an Orthodox Jew, an evangelical Protestant, a conservative Catholic?

Have they reflected that these believers belong to religious faiths which have condemned homosexual conduct as immoral for thousands of years? And that these people take their religious convictions seriously?

Do they understand why these people consider homosexuality to be something worse than garden variety immorality? Have they ever taken the trouble to see what traditionalists mean when they call homosexual behavior "unnatural"?

Are they aware that these believers fear social approval of "unnatural" forms of vice will lead to further approval of already flourishing "natural" forms? That they fear giving the okay to homosexuality will open the door wider to lying, stealing, cheating, violence, etc., not to mention other forms of sexual misconduct?

Can they appreciate that these people see the issue of gays in the military as but one item on a much larger gay rights agenda? Or that they believe the ultimate goal of the gay rights agenda is to win full social approval of homosexuality, not mere tolerance?

Can they understand that many religious believers see the gay rights movement as part and parcel of a secularist assault on religion? And that they believe the ultimate goal of secularism is not separation of church and state but the erosion and eventual destruction of religion?

In short, do those on the cultural Left get it?

The answer of course is, no, they don't. And the reason they don't is that it is almost an axiom with them that religious traditionalists are to be held in disdain. So how can they take seriously the opinions of the cultural lower orders? They no more try to understand the point of view of such primitives than the Victorian lady or gentleman tried to enter into the worldview of the servants. (It should be noted that those old-fashioned servants were better behaved than your typical Protestant evangelical of the present day, who doesn't realize that when it comes to important questions of social justice—like gays in the military—he should defer to his betters.)

Now I'm not saying that liberals should agree with their conservative opponents. Maybe the conservatives are wrong. Maybe their imaginations are overheated. Maybe they are suffering from a persecution complex. But is it too much to ask that liberals should at least try to understand the religious conservatives?

Time was when liberals prided themselves on their ability to understand the point of view of those they disagreed with. But the liberal temper of mind—the intellectual courtesy that presumes the other fellow has something to say that is worth listening to—is vanishing. That someone like Anthony Lewis should have no clue as to what motivates opposition to gays in the military is, as I said at the outset, appalling.

Think for a moment of the conditions that have to be met before you can legitimately accuse a person—not to mention accusing tens of millions of people—of bigotry. First, the issue at stake has to be a moral and social question of fundamental importance. Second, you have to possess a thorough understanding of the issues involved. Third, you have to be obviously on the right side. Fourth, your opponent has to be equally obviously on the wrong side. Fifth, your opponent's reason for being on the wrong side has to be utterly devoid of rational justification. And sixth, you have to have a thorough understanding of your opponent's point of view.

This is a heavy set of conditions, and plainly they have not been met on the part of liberals who dismiss as mere bigotry all opposition to Clinton's proposal.

If the bigotry charge were nothing more than a cheap shot it would be of little concern. After all, the temptation to take cheap shots in the midst of heated debate is a strong one. But I fear this really is something more. It is a symptom of the narrowness which is overtaking the average contemporary liberal mind, to the point where it becomes almost sectarian. The liberal is turning illiberal.

I don't know what impact gays in the military will have on military discipline. But the debate on this issue has revealed a wretched lack of intellectual discipline on the part of people who pretend to be liberals. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

PREJUDICE OR DISAGREEMENT?

HOMOSEXUALS IN THE MILITARY

I love watching politics from a distance. The distance is that maintained by someone who doesn't care who wins but is fascinated with the way the game is played. (Here, because I know from angry letters that there are readers who seriously think it would have made a major difference to the future of the nation if George Bush had won and Bill Clinton had lost, I must say that if I had thought it would have made a significant difference of the sort I care about, or that a lesser of two evils could have been found during this election, I would have found it morally necessary to vote. Since I didn't, I didn't.) I like how rapidly the press has found out that Clinton—whose victory was so obviously cheered on by the media—is, after all, a waffler, a man who miscalculates, a man of less principle than they had thought, not really the messiah, etc., etc. What do they expect of a man who has to appeal to as many people as possible? Courage? Insight? Boldness? How about vagueness, cloudy good feeling, and all the hard-edged thinking you might expect of a man who would choose Al Gore, Fleetwood Mac, and

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Maya Angelou as vicars? I'm thinking of a new bumper sticker: *Don't blame me. I didn't vote.*

Here in New York we are embroiled in a controversy which would seem to have a national analogue, but doesn't. Gay and lesbian Irish and Irish-Americans who insisted on marching under their own banner during the Saint Patrick's Day parade were turned down by the parade sponsors, the Ancient Order of the Hibernians. Mayor David Dinkins favored the gays, the parade was taken from the AOH, given to a group formed for the purpose of accepting the gay marchers, a boycott by people who oppose gays marching under their own banner has been threatened, various moves have been made in one direction or another, and at the time of this writing there is no clear resolution. It seems there will be either a thin parade or a defeat for Dinkins on this issue. (Either way it will be a defeat for Dinkins.) Since in addition to not voting for presidents I don't go to parades, I don't care, but the comparison of this controversy with the Clinton proposal to admit homosexuals into the military—the apparent national analogue—is a false one.

The parade has always been a funny mix of private and public sponsorship, and at least some gays made it known that they worried that an order to force the AOH to accept gay marchers could work both ways: what if gays wanted to celebrate gay pride with a parade, and were forced to accept a contingent from, say, the United Homophobes of America? Isn't there a right to free association, even where we don't like the associations that may be freely made?

The question of gay members of the military seems to me to be a different sort of thing. Obviously, gays have always been in the military. A directive issued during the Reagan years forced the issue: people were asked about their sexual orientation. My own opinion is that a reasonable compromise here would be to drop the question, and enforce a code of conduct that would make any unwanted sexual advance, from or toward people of either sex by either sex, a reason for disciplinary action, and otherwise forget about it and leave people alone.

Some recent polls have revealed what has been characterized as a "split" in the attitudes of most Americans: they seem opposed to discrimination against gays in such matters as employment and housing, but are ambivalent, at best, about what could look like approval of what the press increasingly calls "gay lifestyles." The characterization of this supposed split is accompanied by a rhetoric that offers a similarly simple either/or: you either support the idea that "gay lifestyles" are the equivalent in every way of "heterosexual lifestyles" (faithful fathers and mothers in one home, usually with kids), or you are "homophobic." Those who oppose the correct line on this issue are alleged to be "afraid" of homosexuals or homosexuality, "uncomfortable" with the issue, "bigoted," etc. Some may indeed be any or all the above, but this is too simple by far.

"'Wrong'?—I thought you said that everybody was entitled to his own opinion!"

It may seem a rhetorically effective tactic to characterize someone who disagrees with you as someone who does so out of fear, but it isn't really logically compelling. Someone may disagree with you because you are wrong, or because the person who disagrees sincerely believes you are wrong. This isn't cowardice, but conviction, and to be confident of a belief looks like arrogance or fear to people who believe that there is no such thing as a real truth, or who believe that no idea may be more compelling than another idea. In a time when all ideas are seen as opinions, and all opinions are equal, the feelings that are now being characterized as "split" may in fact be the survivals of a more important and deeper and more sophisticated understanding.

It is more sophisticated in that it can accept complication. There is an acceptance of the fact that it is wrong to hurt or despise people whose choices may not only not be yours, but may really be wrong choices. You can disagree and not exclude them from the human community. It is not a sign of a split in their thinking, but rather a sign of some appreciation of complexity, that people can find something objectionable about the equation of homosexual activity and heterosexual marriage, and at the same time agree that homosexuals should not be discriminated against. There also seems to be an appreciation here of the fact that homosexuality is not a choice (which means that in and of itself it is not a moral question), and in this sense homosexuality can be compared with race, and prejudice against homosexuals with racial prejudice.

There is, however, an extreme view found among some gay activists; they would argue that there is no essential moral difference between bathhouse promiscuity and monogamous fidelity—both are "rights," and to take a different point of view is homophobia. A heterosexual may be willing to accept a monogamous gay couple as neighbors, and to believe that people should not lose their jobs simply because they are homosexual; at the same time, it is not homophobia to believe that faithful heterosexual marriage and parenthood, or the asceticism celibacy involves, are objectively better ways of being.

A gay person who disagreed with me about all of this, but accepted the fact that our disagreement should not lead to my silencing, who thought that my unacceptable view could be tolerated but not necessarily implemented, would not by that token be "heterophobic." He would merely have accepted a certain civilized complication, a right to differ, even about the deepest things, and still live in the same society. His tolerance would not be what I want—I want him, of course, to agree that I am right!—but we all do have a right to expect tolerance, and no right at all to equate it with acceptance. □

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WHEN THE BANKS WENT OFF THE RAILS

A WAR MEMOIR FROM THE EIGHTIES

HAROLD ISBELL

A new administration is in place and one of its nagging problems will be the condition of our banking system. Although current banking news tends to the upbeat, we are still living with the consequences of a major debacle. How could there have been such massive failures of both savings and loans and commercial banks in the last decade? How was the cost of that fiscal disaster visited upon the country's taxpayers? And finally, what direction should regulation take to help make sure this doesn't happen again? Let's begin at the beginning.

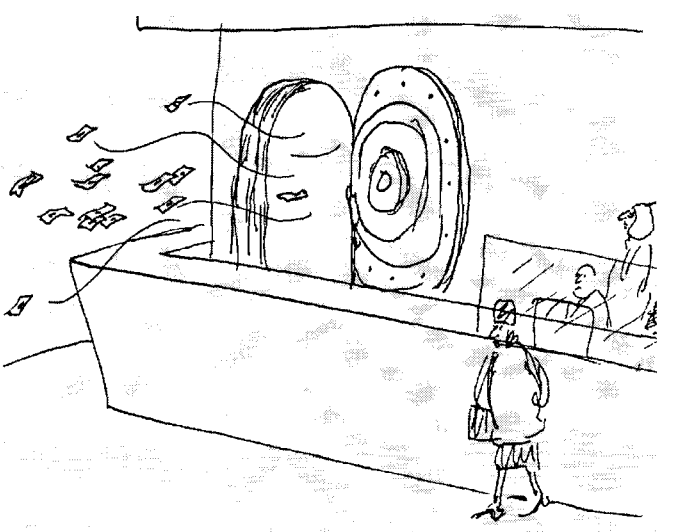
A bank is not a complex phenomenon. The term originally referred to the bench or counter on which a money changer conducted his business. Before too long, that bench became the place where a person needing ready cash could borrow money under certain conditions or could secure a letter of credit in which the banker substituted his credit for that of his customer. Most commonly these transactions specified a rate of interest as well as a duration of time over which the funds could remain on loan.

At its simplest a bank functioned with little more formality than is found when one person borrows money from another or when one person guarantees the obligation of another. As time passed the banker became the source of funds for borrowers as well as a refuge or a place of safekeeping for the excess funds of others. Thus a working definition: A bank is an intermediary between those with excess and those with deficient liquidity, liquidity being the ability readily to convert assets into cash.

From the earliest days bankers lent their own funds. Consequently there was every incentive to ensure that the funds would be returned. Later, when the banker might well be lending a mix of his own funds and the funds of others, he would be expected to maintain the same level of care and attention. Not too many decades ago a standard negative reply to a loan request was: "I'm sorry, but I cannot commit my depositors' funds to this particular venture." Such a denial might be based on a variety of reasons, most obvious of which was the fear that the borrower could fail and the loan would not be repaid. But a more common fear was that the borrower would require more time for repayment while simultaneously depositors would be demanding their funds of the banker. This shows the two elements essential to a mutually beneficial banking relationship: creditworthiness and liquidity.

During the Great Depression many banks failed because their depositors suddenly, and en masse, demanded the return of their deposits. Since most of any bank's resources are invested in its loan portfolio, the banks were often unable to meet such extreme and unexpected demands. This chain of events is known as a "run on the bank" (remember Jimmy Stewart in *It's a Wonderful Life*!).

Confronted with such widespread insolvencies, the Roosevelt administration began a radical restructuring of the banking system. Restructuring took a number of forms. First, depositors' confidence was restored by providing a system of deposit insurance funded by regular assessments on all insured banks. In the event of a major underwriting disaster triggered by multi-



"Shut that door!"

HAROLD ISBELL, *a graduate of the University of Michigan Graduate School of Bank Management, was an officer and director of The Continental Bank & Trust Company in Salt Lake City. His books include* Ovid: Heroides *(Penguin).*

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ple insolvencies, the fund, as an agency of the federal government, would have ready access to the U.S. Treasury to pay off depositors.

Second, the banking business was also divided between commercial banks and savings and loan associations. The loans that could be made and the deposits that could be accepted by each were distinct. Commercial banks were expected to deal primarily in shorter term loans while the S&Ls, also known as thrifts, were specifically chartered for the purpose of extending long-term mortgages to home buyers; they were excluded from other kinds of lending.

Commercial banks were allowed to offer both savings accounts and checking accounts, although the former could not be accessed by checks. Thrifts were permitted to accept only "time" or savings deposits. Restricting checking privileges limited the depositors' ability to move deposits rapidly. Savings accounts, or time deposits, also carried a provision that, unlike a checking or "demand" account, a withdrawal order could be delayed for a period up to thirty days. As a matter of practice neither a bank nor a thrift invoked this privilege unless it was on the brink of failure. In addition, and most significantly, ordinary savings accounts in both banks and thrifts had limits on the maximum rates of interest they could pay on deposits.

For many years this system served the country very well, especially as the Depression gave way first to World War II and then to the spectacular postwar economic boom. However, the system was dismantled by legislation in 1980 and 1982 when the distinction based on loans and deposits was virtually eliminated. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

By the 1970s, a market had grown for outside investors interested in buying long-term mortgage loans. Thrifts commonly sold their loans to such investors while retaining—for a fee paid by the investor—the obligation to collect payments and monitor the health of the loan. The first hints of serious trouble in the U.S. banking system came with inflation and steadily rising interest rates in the midseventies after the Arab oil embargo.

Interest rates for loans rise during inflationary periods to provide assurance that the money received at the end of the loan will retain the purchasing power those funds had at the beginning of the loan. When interest rates suddenly began rising after 1975 to compensate for inflation, lenders found their loans plunging in value, and not because they were likely to be defaulted. Simply put, the loans carried a fixed rate of return and the money market was demanding a higher rate. No investor would buy an older mortgage paying 8 percent when he or she might buy a more recent loan yielding 12 percent. Such a situation could be accommodated only by decreasing or marking down the value of the older, lower yielding loan.

But let me explain. Let's say an ordinary commercial loan of $100,000 was made at 8 percent and due in a year. Two interest payments of $4,000, the first due at the end of 180 days and the second at maturity, are required. When the loan would come due at the end of twelve months, the borrower would have to hand over $104,000. But let's suppose that after six months the lender suddenly needs the face amount of the note. The lending institution's problem is that in those six months the prevailing interest rate has gone from 8 percent to 12 percent and of course nobody wants to buy the 8 percent loan from the bank. A solution is for the bank to discount the selling price of the note to $98,113.45 so that the new buyer, after investing that amount, will receive in six months $104,000 from the original borrower. By discounting the loan, the seller offers the investor a payoff that equals 12 percent on the $98,113.45 investment. The borrower, meanwhile, will almost certainly never know that all of this happened.

Such an investment strategy is not unlike that of retailers who discount less desirable goods to move them out of inventory. We find ourselves with a financier's rule of thumb: when interest rates are rising the value of existing loans declines and when interest rates are declining the value of existing loans rises. Consequently, at the outset the banking crisis was not so much one of creditworthiness on the part of the existing borrowers as it was one of marketability or liquidity for the loan itself.

Bankers found their position even more complicated as depositors came to expect higher interest on their time deposits. The interest payments an institution was making to depositors could well exceed the interest income being earned from its loan portfolio. Worse, the institution which set out to sell an older, less desirable portfolio confronted immediate losses because these lower yielding assets were sharply discounted in value when put up for sale to outside investors.

A.F. Moritz

Untreated Condition

My feet were floating away from me. Already
they were so far I could no longer feel them.
But I despised them, and I didn't trouble about it.

My wife screamed and screamed at me as the feet
drifted beyond her. She tried to wake me, shouting,
Why don't you bring them back?

The doctor wanted to tie them down. He wanted
to save them by cutting pieces off; by doling them,
bite by bite, to the ground, he thought he could delay

their disappearing. And he was right, no doubt.
But I didn't want it. Nor did I want too great a haste
in my falling apart, no bitter spectacular decay:

nothing so opulent. Just something small, even
despised: to be, unknown to myself, each day
a little faster, without wanting it, dying out.

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It is true that after forty years the New Deal banking reforms had become a thicket of laws and regulations. By about 1975 a cry for the deregulation of both the banks and the thrifts was widespread. The thrifts, which were locked into low-interest mortgage loans, especially sought release from their illiquid and unremunerative portfolios and access to more profitable opportunities. This was accomplished with much fanfare in the Rose Garden of the White House by enactment of the Garn-St. Germain Banking Act of 1982 which radically redefined the nature of a thrift while, for the most part, doing little to open up wider opportunity to commercial banks, something that the bill's proponents liked to call "leveling the playing field." At the same time it became much easier to obtain a charter to open S&Ls. While few would deny that the system needed reform, the effect of Garn-St. Germain was to clear cut the forest rather than to clean out the underbrush. Additionally, the Reagan administration began a massive cutback in the number of bank examiners and the frequency and extent of examinations, leaving a new situation essentially without effective oversight.

The new rules put the S&Ls in direct competition with commercial banks. And what a competition it was! Not only were the thrifts free to pay any rate on deposits, a privilege they had gained in 1980 (The Depository Institutions Deregulation and Monetary Control Act), but with Garn-St. Germain they were suddenly empowered to invest in almost any kind of venture that came along. A cardinal rule of prudent banking practice had once held that bankers lent money only in their own market areas. But after Garn-St. Germain thrifts could lend anywhere and for almost any purpose. In the past they had been forbidden to make commercial loans of any duration; now it was possible to lend both in the short term and in the long term to commercial borrowers.

Loans to construct commercial real estate, a time-honored form of commercial bank lending, were an arena the thrift industry almost universally found attractive. Traditionally, the initial loan is made with several conditions or covenants essential to the success of the loan. First, a contract is agreed to by which the relatively short-term construction financing will be paid off at the completion of construction by being sold to one of the traditional lenders in the real estate market, usually a life insurance company or a pension fund. Second, if the value of the project depends on having tenants in place, then the developer seeking the loan will provide firm leases for either part or all of the space as part of the collateral package. Finally, there is a standard requirement that the proceeds of the construction loan be disbursed incrementally and then only with proper and appropriate certification that the work has been done, that all employees and suppliers are paid, and that the job is progressing according to plan.

In the newly deregulated environment these conditions were often improperly or inadequately negotiated. As a result, most of our cities have one or more major construction projects standing nearly empty or unfinished. The failure to negotiate a bona fide loan package turned out at times to be the result of fraud. But just as frequently such failures were the result of inexperience and gullibility. This is not surprising because the transition to the new powers permitted by Garn-St. Germain occurred without time or opportunity to train existing personnel or to hire additional lending officers with experience in commercial real estate.

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In this atmosphere the so-called junk bonds appeared. Junk bonds were not new. Only the name and the fact that they were marketed to the general public—widows and orphans included—was new. While a senior executive of a thrift might hesitate to make a direct loan to a major national or even international corporation, by buying that company's notes or bonds from a broker he was in fact making a long-term commercial loan. Many of these loans were generated as a funding mechanism for leveraged buyouts. These transactions proceeded on the cheery assumption that a company could increase its profitability without interruption while carrying the burden of substantial new debt. This unfortunate assumption gave the loans a quality of risk that not enough people appreciated.

In every lending situation there are at least a few questions to which the lender must receive adequate answers. But all such questions come down to: "What are the sources and methods of repayment?" By not asking this question, or even worse, by not understanding or ignoring the implications of its answer, many bankers condemned their institutions to failure. Many loans, for example, were to be paid off by liquidation of the collateral. A commercial bank's loan customer needed to convert its inventory to accounts receivable by billing and then convert those bills to cash. Obviously, the value and the marketability of the collateral was critical. In other words, someone had to buy the product produced with the borrowed money. This was also true in lending for the construction or improvement of real estate. But too often and for a number of reasons the finished product could not be sold or rented at a price commensurate with its cost of production. What had once seemed a good deal became a house of cards.

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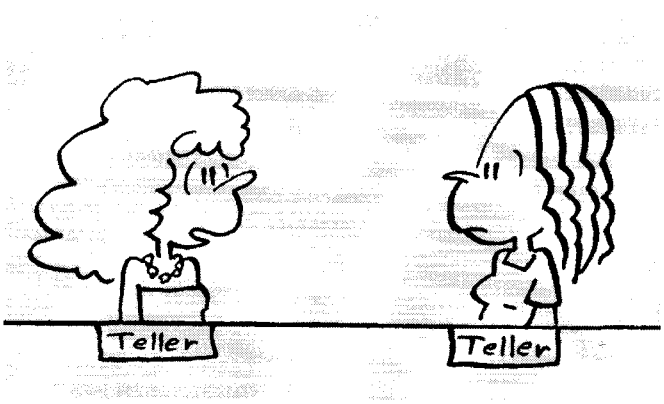
Risk is a relative thing. In good times each day can bring new heights of prosperity—"Real estate only goes up," was frequently heard—and ventures that might ordinarily seem dangerous are swept along by the rising tide. Even something quite doubtful succeeds simply because everything else succeeds. However, the business cycle is merciless and a prudent person in good times never forgets bad times and vice versa. While such wisdom is so conventional as to be a cliché, a good part of a generation of financiers forgot it. By the mid-1980s lending institutions found themselves with increasing portfolios of nonperforming assets, at first delinquent loans and then later foreclosed collateral in the form of properties that could neither be sold nor rented, at least not at the prices originally expected.

But the plot thickens. At the outset bankers hit by this turn of events, rather like Mr. Micawber hoping that something better might turn up, offered higher and higher rates of interest to attract the deposits needed to keep their rapidly sinking balance sheets afloat. This meant that by the mid-1980s not just high-rolling borrowers and financial executives were greatly benefiting from the deregulation of Garn-St. Germain. Indeed, large numbers of quite ordinary, law-abiding citizens found their rates of return on savings accounts as well as long-term certificates of deposit reaching levels no one had ever expected. Long-term deposits began to pay more than 14 percent, even rising to highs of nearly 20 percent. Suddenly, a major activity for the retired parents of many of us was maintaining separate deposit accounts, each no larger than the stated insured level, at as many institutions as their stamina permitted. And in the line at the teller's cage an observer would have found not only retirees looking for a higher return on savings, but treasurers and money managers from corporations of every size and description. The new deregulated deposits came in the form of IRA accounts, guardianship accounts for the care and education of minor children, and the cash reserves of charities, churches, and schools, to mention only a few.

If, as Calvin Coolidge said, the business of the country is business, then for a time the business of the country was to gather the largesse falling like manna with the morning dew. Any need to question the soundness of the institution was eliminated by the fact that the deposits were fully insured to a maximum of $100,000 by a governmental agency. To compound the problem, the notion quickly got abroad that in the event of failure all deposits would be covered by insurance, regardless of size. In addition, it began to appear that the various regulatory bodies would go to virtually any length to prevent the failure of a key bank. Some institutions came to be perceived as too big—or too important—to fail. Bankers who should have known better, or who should at least have never surrendered their native skepticism, devoutly came to believe that the government in some mysterious way would protect them from their own folly. By 1984, institutions began aggressively to seek new deposits not only in their traditional market areas but nationally and even globally through a network of eager brokers. Virtually all of these deposits were limited to $100,000, the maximum that could be insured. Simultaneously most of these deposits were for relatively short periods of time, usually less than one year. In such an environment a deposit could depart as easily as it had arrived. Such deposits quickly became known as "hot money" for the very simple reason that the depositor could have liquidity needs that had no relation to the area in which the thrift or bank conducted its business. The net effect of maintaining a rapidly expanding asset portfolio of increasingly dubious quality on a base of such volatility compounded the fact that the institutions were borrowing short and lending long, a practice that when carried to these extremes became a prescription for disaster.



"I'm getting worried—it's been three days *since anybody made a deposit!"*

A significant transfer of wealth occurred thanks to these high rates on deposits guaranteed by the deposit insurance of kindly old Uncle Sam. Those who benefited were not only large borrowers of greater or lesser integrity, but also the aged and the not-so-aged, the sophisticated and the naive, all of whom congratulated themselves on their remarkable ability to earn high rates on cash reserves. Because of the reluctance to address the multiple problems of failing loans when they were discovered, this transfer continued well beyond the time that the underlying assets could support liabilities of such a magnitude.

Why did institutions remain in business, running up interest expenses, when they were dead in the water? That is the question that every American must ask loudly and persistently because it was this simple failure to act that permitted the interest meter to go on running.

Undoubtedly there was massive fraud and misappropriation by borrowers and managers in the banking industry; immense sums of money were improperly if not fraudulently advanced through loans that could never be repaid. Fortunes were amassed in very short order and under entirely suspicious circumstances. But the sobering fact remains that ordinary depositors who accepted inappropriately high rates of return must be counted among those who contributed to what eventually would be recognized as a raid on the Treasury.

As I indicated before, at the same time that the nature of the banking business was changing, the method of government regulation also changed. In previous years, every bank and every thrift that accepted deposits from the public was examined annually. The purpose of this examination was to assure the reg-

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ulators that the institution did in fact possess a degree of liquidity sufficient to meet the demands of its depositors and that the quality of its assets, especially its portfolio of loans, was satisfactory.

Obviously the examination gave assurance to the insuror—the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) for the banks and the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation (FSLIC) for the thrifts—that there was little risk of an underwriting loss by insolvency. In other words, just as the lending institution determined the creditworthiness of its borrower, so too the regulators—the central bankers and the writers of depository insurance—determined that the bank itself was creditworthy.

Unfortunately, during the Reagan years, this pattern of detailed and hands-on review was sharply curtailed as a measure of economy—probably the most costly example of penny-pinching in history. It was anticipated that the institution's own internal review and audit functions and those of its outside accountants would suffice. That may have been the expectation and in many cases it actually did work. But at the same time the absence of a regular, and usually unexpected, adversarial examination permitted the most outlandish examples of unsound banking to flourish.

Now what? The move to deregulate, in itself, is not now nor was it in the beginning a bad idea. The problem occurred when the babies suddenly began to go out with their bath water. More recently the term "deregulation" itself is in bad repute and we hear talk of "reform."

The new thrust, at least as envisioned by bankers, is again to permit broader powers and enlarged opportunities for business. The most prominent item on their agenda is interstate banking. By consolidating not only the ownership of at least several banks but also the actual management of these banks, it is possible to achieve very substantial economies of scale. Other areas that are very attractive as new kinds of business activity are the selling of investment securities and various kinds of insurance. A less welcome element of the new reform for bankers, and this has already been imposed, is the requirement of capital adequacy ratios substantially higher—at least for some banks—than those prevailing only a few years ago.

Capital adequacy has been addressed by the FDIC Improvement Act of 1991 (FDICIA) in response to the massive banking defaults of the 1980s. This federal legislation establishes guidelines according to which "prompt corrective action" will be taken as an institution becomes undercapitalized. The regulation specific to this became effective on December 19, 1992. Very simply, an institution with a capital ratio of less than 2 percent of assets will be classified as "critically undercapitalized" whereas a "well capitalized" institution will have a ratio greater than 5 percent. Such scrutiny should serve as a real deterrent to the kind of abuses prevalent in the 1980s.

There has been widespread fear that the problems of S&Ls would also turn up in the operations of larger commerical banks.

Books of related interest

I found the following books helpful in trying to understand what happened to the banks in the last decade:

America: What Went Wrong? by Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele, Andrews and McMeel, $6.95, 234 pp.

Den of Thieves, by James B. Stewart, Simon & Schuster, $12, 587 pp.

Inside Job: The Looting of America's Savings and Loans, by Stephen Pizzo, Mary Fricker, and Paul Muolo, McGraw Hill, $19.94, 443 pp.

Who Robbed America?: A Citizen's Guide to the Savings & Loan Scandal, by Michael Waldman and the staff of Public Citizen's Congress Watch, Random House, $10.95, 250 pp. H.I.

But at least for now it seems that major commercial banking disasters have been averted by the merger of Manufacturer's Hanover and Chemical Bank in New York and in California the merger of Security Pacific and Bank of America. While rumors persist that one or another major bank might be on the verge of failure, it is virtually impossible to predict such failure without a detailed internal analysis of a bank's position. The greater significance of these rumors is, first, that they were closely associated with last fall's presidential campaign and, second, that these rumors flourished because of a popularly held conviction that the health of the banking system had been seriously compromised by political leaders who profited by deregulation. Any political manipulation of the banking system is, I think, an extremely grave situation and must be remedied as quickly as possible.

When all is said and done, the ultimate insuror has now been met and he is us, the American taxpayer. Market economics and the rhetorical appeal to some kind of inherent ethical good sense did not prevent disaster. There can be no alternative, in my view, but to restore and responsibly implement the mechanisms of regulation. A banking system that had been cobbled together in haste to meet the exigencies of the Depression was hardly perfect. But it did operate in the awareness that a regulated industry was necessary to preserve the entirely legitimate interests of the body politic. Nothing short of a return to such a public policy of mandated fiduciary responsibility can be tolerated. To the best of my knowledge, a *laissez-faire* approach to something so basic as a nation's money and its use cannot possibly work because such a posture requires that the nation and its citizens accept the risk of periodic massive and widespread failures. Seen differently, to accept such a risk is to accept the fact that many depositors, both large and small, will be destroyed or that the Treasury will be decimated. I suggest that such a risk is entirely unacceptable to any prudent person, government, or society. □

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PEOPLE ARE GETTING HURT

THE RISE IN GAY-BASHING

GEORGE M. ANDERSON

People who think "hate crime" is a nonstarter as a behavioral category—or who don't want "gay-bashing" included within it—should talk, as I did recently, with Lieutenant Bill Johnston of the Boston Police Department. Johnston heads the department's Community Disorders Unit, which investigates cases of bias crime; as such, he sometimes acts as a decoy in bars, both straight and gay, where attacks have been common. Interviewed by phone, he made clear why he thinks bias crime is crime with a difference, and why he includes gay-bashing within it.

"When I was a decoy in a straight bar where robberies had been taking place," he said, "I was just robbed. When I was a decoy in a gay bar I was not simply robbed, I was also beaten." When back-up officers arrived to make arrests, he added, the men who beat him were surprised that their behavior was taken seriously. "They said,'oh, he's only a fag'—as if they had been engaged in no more than a weekend sport."

The more familiar bias crimes rise out of racial, ethnic, or religious prejudice: crossburnings by the Ku Klux Klan, swastikas painted on synagogue walls, name-calling, physical attacks on African-Americans, Jews, Asians. Though some argue that it is improper to classify and punish crimes according to motive, supporters of bias crime laws argue it is necessary to track the incidence of bias crimes, and to punish them with special severity, because they can intimidate an entire class of people, and because they often include the threat or reality of violence.

There are indications that hate crimes in general are on the rise in the United States. The Anti-Defamation League has reported an 11 percent increase in anti-Semitic incidents between 1990 and 1992. Dr. Howard Ehrlich, research director of the National Institute against Prejudice and Violence, said in a recent interview in Baltimore that the rise in hate crimes began in the mid-1980s, and reflects an overall escalation of violence throughout American society. Whereas earlier most of the violence was directed against property, today, he said, we are seeing "cruder and more personal forms of attacks."

That appears to apply in particular to attacks on gays. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute asserts that antigay harassment and violence in five major U.S. cities jumped by 131 percent from 1990 to 1991. An earlier (1987) report on bias crime prepared for the National Institute of Justice, a branch of the U.S. Department of Justice, concluded that homosexuals may well have become the most frequent victims of hate violence today. A single instance, among many that could be cited, took place in the Montrose section of Houston on July 4, 1991. A twenty-seven-year-old man, Paul Broussard, was beaten and stabbed to death outside a gay bar by a group of ten young men armed with knives and nail-studded two-by-fours.

Dr. Ehrlich attributes the rise to the increased visibility of gay men and lesbians. This follows a pattern: "When a traditionally subordinate group becomes more visible, levels of conflict increase." He cited the harassment and attacks suffered by some Arab-Americans when the Gulf War brought their presence into public awareness. Holocaust memorial services on college campuses, he said, are sometimes linked with an increase in anti-Semitic incidents. In the case of homosexuals, he points to such factors as the election of openly gay public officials, the emergence of AIDS, and the growth of churches like the MCC [Metropolitan Community Churches, whose members are predominantly gay]. Others might add the increasingly assertive (and, to many, offensive) tactics adopted by homosexual groups like ACT-UP in demonstrations aimed at individuals, groups, and institutions, including the Catholic church, and in campaigns to enact or preserve statutes outlawing discrimination against homosexuals in housing and employment, establishing inheritance and health insurance rights for gay partners, or granting recognition of "gay marriage."

Barry Goodinson, executive director of Dignity/USA, a national organization of gay and lesbian Catholics, and a member of our small inner-city parish in Washington, D.C., spoke with me about the varied forms that "gay-baiting" and "gay-bashing" can take. Goodinson, thirty-two, is a graduate of Saint John's Seminary and College in Boston and of Georgetown University. Sometimes, he said, the attacks are verbal. "I was walking with a male friend near Dupont Circle, when a passer-by yelled 'faggot' at us," he recalled. Such attacks, he said, have become more and more common—proof, for him, of "the current high level of homophobia." He would include as another form of gay-bashing the 1992 ballot initiatives in Oregon and Colorado aimed at banning civil rights protections forbidding

GEORGE M. ANDERSON, S.J., *is pastor of Saint Aloysius Church in Washington, D.C.*

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Euthanasia on the Ballot...

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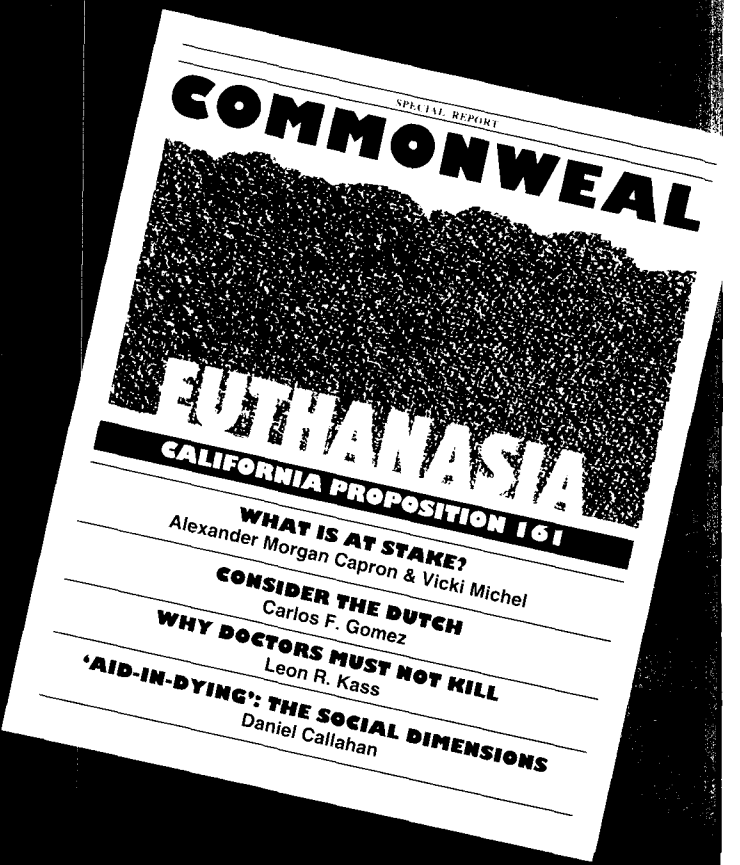
LEON KASS examines the consequences for physicians and medical practice if doctors are given the authority to kill or assist in the suicide of their patients. (He is a physician and philosopher at the University of Chicago.)

DANIEL CALLAHAN explores the consequences for society and medicine of legalizing euthanasia. (He is a philosopher, bioethicist, and director of the Hasting Center.)

California's euthanasia proposition was described as "state of the art" legislation by its proponents. In COMMONWEAL's special supplement Alexander Morgan Capron, professor of law and medicine at the University of Southern California, and Vicki Michel, associate director of the university's Center for Health Policy and Ethics, analyze its language, criteria, and safeguards.



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Susan Rea

Silence

I hear no sound
as clearly as your silence,
that net holding
night in place
despite the stars, which are
what I want you to say.

discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Oregon's, which would have required schools to teach that homosexuality is "abnormal, wrong, unnatural, and perverse," failed, but Colorado's less extreme measure forbidding "protective status based on homosexual, lesbian, or bisexual orientation," passed.

Defenders of such initiatives say that laws to protect homosexuals aren't necessary because gays and lesbians are already covered by civil rights laws and don't need "special" protection. But, according to sources like Boston's Lieutenant Johnston, gays are the object of attacks precisely because of their sexual orientation—and police efforts to respond to the problem are hindered because victims are often reluctant to press charges or even to contact the police because they fear harassment at work, loss of jobs, or alienation from their families if they do testify in court on the nature of the incident. Johnston recalled a 1990 case of a man who had been severely beaten. "There's no doubt it was an antigay attack," he said. "It took place in the South End, where there's a large gay presence, and the perpetrator was using terms demeaning to homosexuals." The police were ready to classify the episode as a bias crime, but were stymied by the victim's reluctance to prosecute. "Only in the gay community do you find this kind of fear," he added. "I never see it in bias crimes involving blacks or Hispanics."

Who are the gay-bashers? Known perpetrators are predominantly males in their teens or early twenties, often from middle-class backgrounds. A segment of the CBS program "Street Stories" aired last year was based on a police decoy operation begun in Houston after the murder of Paul Broussard. It included an interview with a nineteen-year-old man who regularly drove into the Montrose section of the city with a friend to prey on homosexuals. He compared beating them to smashing pumpkins on Halloween; they did not appear to him as real people. "It just seems like they're their own race," he said. "I don't really feel no remorse about anything I ever did to a gay person....It's just the way I grew up."

Lieutenant Johnston believes antigay attacks are socially encouraged. He notes that "gays are the only group in the United States that it's okay to beat up," and points out that even when police make an arrest and a victim is willing to testify, prosecutors may balk at prosecuting vigorously; when they do, they are often thwarted by judges who give lenient sentences. The assumption seems to be that the perpetrators are basically good kids who should not be burdened with a criminal record.

Religion also plays a role, in Johnston's view. "People fall back on their religious beliefs to justify their hate," he says. Some preachers do condemn homosexuality and "gay lifestyles" in terms that, to homosexuals, appear to brand them as evil persons not worthy to live. While both Catholic and mainstream Protestant authorities have generally supported laws banning housing and job discrimination against gays, and the Catholic bishops of Oregon and Colorado opposed the antigay referenda voted on last November, most of the same churches have refused to alter their basic ethical teachings on homosexuality. The Catholic stance, which opposes discrimination against gays, while characterizing homosexual acts as objectively sinful, was complicated by a statement distributed to U.S. Catholic bishops by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in July 1992 entitled "Some Considerations Concerning the Catholic Response to Legislative Proposals on the Non-Discrimination of Homosexual Persons." The document asserts that it is not unjust discrimination to oppose legislation protective of gay rights in areas like teaching, athletic coaching, adoptive parenting, and military recruitment. The Oregon bishops said there was no conflict between their opposition to the referendum and the CDF statement.

Some incidents in Oregon tend to support Dr. Ehrlich's view that increased visibility brings increased hostility against marginalized groups. According to the *National Catholic Reporter* (October 30, 1992), the pastor of one Oregon parish received a telephoned warning against publicizing the bishops' statement opposing the referendum; when it was ignored, vandals set fire to an office in the rectory and painted such phrases as "Catholics love gays" and "Kill Catholics and gays" within the church. The spokesperson for a group organized to fight the referendum—a grandmother who heads the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon—reported receiving telephone threats saying she should be killed for betraying Christianity.

Dr. Ehrlich's thesis is pushed a step further by Gary David Comstock in a 1991 book, *Violence against Lesbians and Gay Men* (Columbia University Press), which contends that heightened violence against gays fosters still greater insistence by gays and lesbians on becoming active in their own cause. That insistence was evident in our own parish a few weeks before last November's meeting of U.S. bishops in Washington, D.C., when Barry Goodinson invited worshipers to sign a petition being circulated nationwide by New Ways Ministry, an advocacy group for gay Catholics. The petition, directed to the hierarchy, took specific issue with the CDF's apparent fear that legislative protections for gay men and lesbians could threaten family life, and contended that there is no empirical evidence to support such fear. Among the 14,000 persons across the country who signed the New Ways petition were two who are themselves bishops, Walter F. Sullivan of Richmond and Thomas J. Gumbleton of Detroit. Many parishioners at Saint Aloysius signed, and so did I. □

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THE OBLIGATIONS OF LOVE

'THE CRYING GAME'

Because the plot of *The Crying Game* contains at least three big surprises, the distributors of the film have requested reviewers to forbear from spilling certain beans. I'll comply for the most part, but I want to point out that even if I spilled every single bean on view, the surprises that I think really matter to writer-director Neil Jordan cannot be betrayed in print. Sudden incisions into character, ineffabilities of atmosphere, the final emergence of a vision of life: these can be experienced only by watching the movie.

The Crying Game has been called Hitchcockian, but that's misleading. Hitchcock was a master manipulator who, at his best, constructed roller coasters for his audiences to ride. There are some interesting characters in his films but, with a few exceptions, characterization is never the *raison d'être* of a Hitchcock movie. The characters exist to be shocked so that we may be shocked. In *The Crying Game*, shock takes us deeper into character.

The plot falls into three sections with each part ending in a twist. And each surprise so destabilizes the protagonist, Fergus, that he must reorganize his life in order to go on with it. Each time Fergus reorganizes, his life completely changes, both externally and internally. What keeps the movie from falling apart into three unrelated films (aside from the visual consistency and forward motion of Jordan's staging) is our constant apprehension that no matter how often Fergus tries to avoid getting involved in further dangers, some other compulsion (to make amends to the dead, to show compassion to the living) will push him right back into them. In fact, Fergus is, if only half-consciously, on a quest. He, or at least some part of him, is trying to learn how to be an honorable man. And, by the end of the movie, Fergus completely achieves his honor but under circumstances that leave us not knowing whether to laugh at him or weep with him, though a perfectly viable alternative would be to weep at him and laugh with him, for our hero, though of a woeful countenance, never loses his sense of the ridiculous.

It's possible to recapitulate the plot without utterly defusing it. Part 1: An I.R.A. volunteer, Fergus, becomes one of the captors and, eventually, the assigned executioner of a black British soldier. But the good-hearted Fergus cannot keep his heart from going out to the equally bonhomous Jody, who, sure that he is doomed, makes Fergus promise to look up his girl, Dil. Jody is indeed doomed but the way he dies is totally unexpected by him, by Fergus, by any of the other Irish volunteers, and, certainly, by the audience. The catastrophe throws Fergus out of Ireland and, so he thinks, out of the I.R.A. Part 2: In England, Fergus looks up Dil and falls in love with her. She responds but Surprise #2 prevents Fergus and Dil from consummating their mutual longings. After some old comrades-in-arms, including a former girlfriend of Fergus, track down our hero, they threaten Dil in order to coerce the now disaffected young man into collaborating on another assassination attempt. Dil's mistaken jealousy of the I.R.A. moll, Fergus's desperate strategy to save Dil's life, his compulsion to tell her of his part in Jody's death, and the sheer haste and panic involved in any assassination plot all coalesce and result in Surprise #3, a denouement full of misery, joy, left-handed justice, and long-term frustration.

The Crying Game shows how a man saves his soul through fulfilling the obligations love puts on him. And what a love it is that Fergus feels for Dil by the time this movie concludes: A most unfashionably platonic, painfully hedged-in sort of love. It is more than guilt or prison bars or the expanse of oceans that keeps our hero and heroine from sexual consummation, and when the country-western chestnut, "Stand by Your Man," is heard on the soundtrack under the closing credits, the irony it conveys is sweet, poignant, malicious, and hilarious—all at once!

But, once plot is told and theme is stated, how to describe the aftertaste this movie leaves in the brain? It's certainly a bittersweet taste but so is that of a thousand-and-one bad movies. What makes *The Crying Game* so special? Let me attempt an indirect answer.

Imagine a loving father, cursed with clairvoyance, watching his children fulfill the destinies he's already foreseen. Always he looks on with love, joy, and sorrow, but never does he lift

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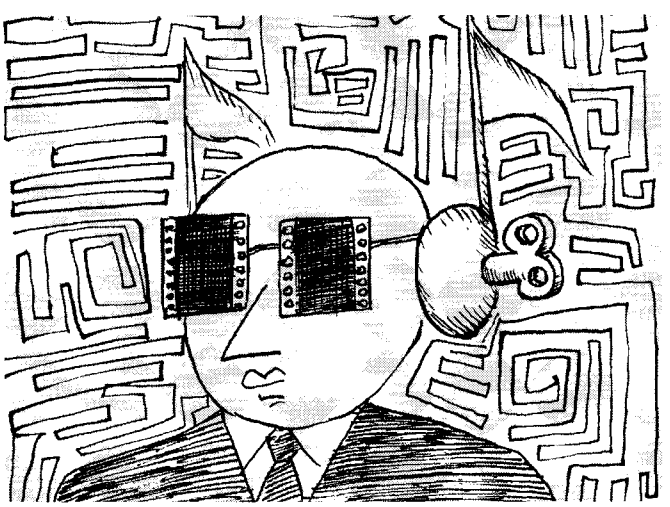
a finger to make sure each reaches the happiest of harbors for he knows it's useless. That's the way Neil Jordan seems to watch his characters move through their destinies. He's created them, he's responsible for them, but he knows that they are the prisoners of Neil Jordan Land where terrible things happen to good people and worse things happen to terrible people and where the night watchman making his rounds never calls out the hour and "All's well" but only sings out the Dylan Thomas line, "Oh, isn't life a terrible thing, thank God?"

Consider just one visual motif as an example of Jordan's loving irony: the spectral reappearances of Jody in Fergus's thoughts as the Irishman becomes more and more deeply involved with Dil. The first one occurs when Fergus, only briefly acquainted with Dil, sees the silhouette of the girl against her bedroom's nightshade embracing the shadow of Dave, an idiotic roughneck. Jody's ghost, in spotless white sweater and plus fours, now appears bowling a cricket ball (arguing about sports helped bond the young men during the soldier's captivity) and smiling the most guileless of smiles. At this point, Jody seems like a noble spirit betrayed by his faithless lady. So Fergus must intervene to reverence the memory of his pal. He does so, by winning Dil's love. After their first sexual encounter, Jody's spirit reappears, still smiling, still bowling. All is well, apparently. But right after Fergus's second attempt to make love to Dil, an encounter that blasts all further intimacies, Jody appears just once more. But this time he's not bowling, only tossing a ball up and down. The smile on his face is still good-natured but also knowing, perhaps a bit apologetic, even a bit taunting. "I know you'd like to wring my neck, Fergus," that smile seems to say, "but I couldn't tell you *everything* about her." Jody the innocent victim has become Jody the presiding spirit of irony.

In one respect, *The Crying Game* has been a tad overrated. Jordan, a former (and future?) novelist, is still more of a writer than a director. His script is audacious but his execution, though dexterous, is rather conventional in terms of blocking and shot structure. A certain rhythmic tameness makes the first third a little too much like all those other I.R.A. hostage plays and movies that have appeared on Broadway or in movie art houses at least once every lustrum in the last half-century. His best visual work is in the creation of the bar where Dil and Fergus rendezvous and which grows ever more sinister as Fergus keeps learning more about Dil.



Jordan certainly knows how to pick and guide actors. Every member of this cast brings out the doubleness of his or her character. Stephen Rea makes of Fergus both a potentially lethal street fighter and the most innocent of sad sacks. Forest Whittacker, the sleepy Samson, perfectly captures both Jody's innocence and his mischief. Miranda Richardson takes Jude, the blonde pincushion of macho I.R.A. louts in the film's first third, and believably turns her into an assertive brunette vamp-assassin in the last. As for Jaye Davidson as Dil...well, I'll just say that Davidson is the latest wonder of the Western World and let you discover this unique creature for yourself. No greater forbearance hath any movie critic than to forgo discussion of the unique Jaye Davidson. RICHARD ALLEVA

MEDIA

A NATION OF STANDUPS

STARRING IN OUR OWN SCRIPTS

Jeffery Paine, who's an editor of the *Wilson Quarterly*, is one of those fellows, whenever you talk with him, comes up with Something Really Smart.

"I was watching reruns of the old 'You Bet Your Life' show," Jeff was saying. "Remember, when Groucho would spend five or ten minutes interviewing and ad-libbing with the contestants before asking them the silly questions? And it struck me that people like that just don't exist anymore."

"Wha," I said.

"They were so *spontaneous*," he said. "They—I don't know—they didn't *think* of themselves as 'being on TV'; at least, not the way everyone does now."

See what I mean? The Paine Theorem becomes obvious if you compare the—call it the "aura" of the original "You Bet Your Life" with that of the current reincarnation featuring Bill Cosby. Never mind that, as a spontaneous wit, the only thing Cosby has in common with Groucho is that he likes cigars, too. It's the *contestants* who are fascinating. Not only do they *know* they're on TV, but in Paine formulation—they *think of themselves* as being on TV; that is, they adopt, quite naturally, the pose and the poise of professional TV "personalities"—the body language, the right facial cast, even the right crispness of speech. And they do it, of course, because unlike their ancestors in the age of Groucho, they have grown up *with* the Tube, and have come to assimilate these gestures and articulations as paradigms of selfhood. Same-o same-o on any other game show, any other talk show, even with the folks interviewed on the local news: we have become among other things, a nation of standups and sound-byters.

Not to get *faux*-profound on you, but one of the things I keep fumbling for in these columns is an understanding of what ex-

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actly the Tube is, as a version and model of human meaning, and how the meanings it imposes determine or deflect the meanings we make. (A Wittgenstein of the couch-potatoes: now *there's* a helluva ambition.)

This, of course, is what obsessed Saint Marshall McLuhan, whose work seems fresher with each passing year. But what fascinates me is not so much the differences among, say, print, film, and electromagnetic media as forms of transmission, but the differences among them as ways of saying what a "story" is.

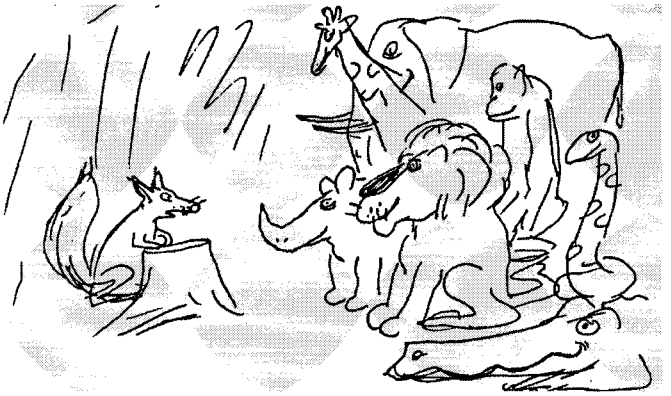
Because if "media" are important at all, they're important as ways of telling stories. And stories are important because, as grand folks from Virginia Woolf to Northrop Frye to the Rev. John S. Dunne tell us, they're the very stuff of our existence: your first theology and our quintessential humanity. Tell me what story you think you're in, and I'll tell you who you really think you are.

This is not exactly a Manhattan-Project big secret. The nineteenth-century novel, and the nineteenth century itself, are replete with characters, fictional and historical, who behave the way they do because the form of the novel itself, with its complicated interfaces of public role-playing and contemplative privacy, has taught them that this is "the way people act." The impact of film on behavior is, if anything, even more apparent and well-documented. A heartbreaking scene early in *Malcolm X* exemplifies this. The young Malcolm and his ghetto pal, both in zoot suits (the zoot suit itself being a baroque elaboration of *film noir* gangster-duds) traipse through a Detroit park playing at being—Bogart and Cagney!

David Toolan's brilliant overview of the work of Walter Ong (*Commonweal*, November 20, 1992) suggests, among much else, that TV is establishing (has established?) a kind of "secondary orality": returning us to the state of turbulently unorganized inner life and ferociously adversarial public performance that distinguishes oral from print cultures. Well, okay: this certainly explains why Sam Donaldson holds down a job. And probably people in oral cultures are more "scripted"—bound by strict codes of behavior and deportment—than folks in print cultures, where the act of reading itself allows an escape into "interiority." The catch, I think, is that "secondary orality" isn't secondary and isn't *really* oral at all. Put it this way. Oral cultures privilege *performance*; print cultures (including film) privilege *behavior*. A crucial break-of-noon figure here is Hamlet, whose tragedy is largely that he can't decide, until it's too late, which paradigm he's operating under: which kind of story he's really in.

But TV culture, I'd suggest, imposes an even harder psychic story on its members (victims?). It demands that performance and behavior be *equally* privileged: that, in fact, they be the same. The Tube is excruciatingly intimate and immediate, a kind of apotheosis of novelistic interiority. It is also scaldingly public, numbering its simultaneous, instantaneous communicants in numbers of, minimally, seven digits. Step outside the borders of that tense, magic pentangle—as when George Bush innocently checks his watch, before the bloody nation, in the middle of the second presidential debate—at peril of falling outside the "story" (read: "reality") altogether.

Catholic, oral culture uses the model of the confessional.



"Remember now, you're all celebrities."

Protestant, print culture uses the model of the private journal and the *examen de conscience*. And in that sense the Tube is a triumph of ecumenism: two varieties of *tsuris* for the price of one.

Nowhere is this more striking than in the growth-industry of over-the-air counseling. It's been around on the radio for years, and was beautifully sent up in the Dolly Parton/James Woods movie, *Straight Talk*. But now it's taking root in the prepared soil of the Tube. Out here on the Second Coast the latest entry, on ninety minutes each day from Monday to Friday from L.A., is Dr. David Viscott.

Now Dr. Viscott has an impressive list of credentials and, besides being exceptionally vetted, seems an exceptionally good fellow: a benevolent Rod Steiger, say, with a *soupçon* of Paul Sorvino's hooded alertness and just the right tincture of a newyawk accent to guarantee that this guy don't dance. Byte for byte, he's the best around to get you through the languors of nine to ten-thirty A.M., unless—and this is universal—you've got a previously-unread Dickens around the house.

But after a while you get edgy. The anonymous callers all coalesce into one monotone, public/private voice. "Jane: Her Husband Won't Change His Underwear." "Steve: Married, But Thinks He's Bisexual." "Ted: Can't Talk To His Father." *Und so weiter*. And Dr. Viscott's instant, add-hot-crisis-and-serve, analyses of these disembodied selves take on a—what?—a bemusing internal harmony, too. "You see, Jane, it's yourself you're angry at, not your husband." "Steve, I think you just have to face your fear of being different, and then you'll see that fear go away. Will you trust me on this?" *Und so weiter*. And then—applying the Jeff Paine Theorem—you get it. These good people imagine their agonies, and Dr. V. instantly pigeonholes their agonies, as if they were all living in a sitcom, where *of course* the human condition can be dealt with in the same snappy dialogue that solves every installment of "Mary Tyler Moore" or "Newhart" or "Roseanne." The game takes two players, analyst as top banana and analysand as straight man. And it may be not better or worse than the same sorts of games of identity we've been playing since we first became human—that is, first became storytellers. But the rules have subtly altered. And they've altered because all of us now are the protagonists, not of our own journals or novels or movies—but, God help us, of our own miniseries.

FRANK MCCONNELL

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The mysteries of attraction

ESTEEM ENLIVENED BY DESIRE
The Couple from Homer to Shakespeare
Jean H. Hagstrum
University of Chicago Press, $36, 495 pp.

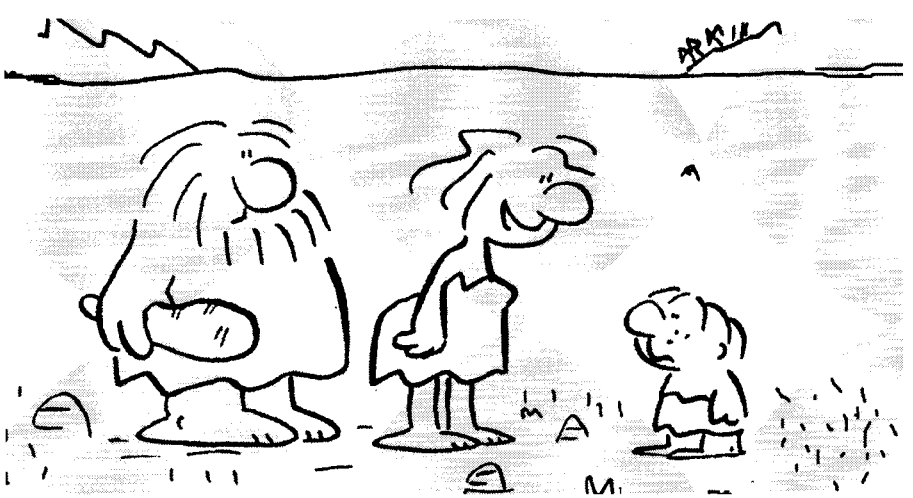
Christopher Lasch

The author of a number of admirable books, not a few of which deal with the emerging ideal of romantic love in early modern art and literature, Hagstrum has surpassed himself in this monumental work, which ranges over more than ten centuries (amply fulfilling the promise of its subtitle) in search of a usable past—an "available heritage concerning the loving couple." To some extent he has also reversed himself, since he now seeks to correct the impression left by his earlier studies, that romantic love came to be associated with marriage only in the modern world. His new book contests this widely accepted interpretation, which Hagstrum attributes to the belated discovery that "love and marriage do not always go together like a horse and carriage." Ever since this disconcerting fact "dawned on us disillusioned moderns,...it has been a continuing scholarly preoccupation to discover just when romantic love came into Western culture." The prevailing consensus—that it came relatively late (in the cruder version of this thesis, only with the "rise of the middle class")—issues decidedly bedraggled, if not altogether demolished, from this determined assault.

Hagstrum does not deny that many authors, both classical and Christian, took a disparaging view of marriage, emphasizing the wife's subordination, the dangerous power of female sexuality, and the incompatibility of sexual passion with the mundane ends marriage was meant to serve. Xenophon spoke for a longstanding tradition in the ancient world when he defined the purpose of marriage as legitimate offspring and the maintenance of the household economy. In the Christian world, an equally strong tradition viewed marriage as an acceptable but hardly exalted alternative to sexual promiscuity, morally much inferior to virginity. Sexual passion had its champions, of course, but it was thought unsuitable for man and wife. In ancient Greece, it was associated with love between men and boys; in the Middle Ages, with adulterous love between men and women. Hagstrum's thesis is not impaired by the recognition that married love had very little place in the dominant tradition of Western patriarchy.

His claim, though it is supported by an imposing structure of erudition, is more modest: that a countertradition, already present in Homer's account of the homecoming that concludes the *Odyssey*, encouraged a "softening of male power in patriarchy," hedged in that power with "civilizing limitations," idealized marriage as the union of desire and esteem, and held up sexual equality as the precondition of erotic friendship. Hagstrum thinks this "vision of marital love," in a culture that has long been supposed to be without it, owed a good deal to the influence of women, which made itself felt, even in works written by men, in the insight that Eros could be a "force for civility" as well as disruption. From the beginning, it would seem, the West was able to imagine that marriage might rest on sexual attraction and mutual respect, instead of on the sexual subordination that was taken as the norm elsewhere in the world.

Imagination was often at odds with practice, to be sure, but we should not therefore conclude that married love was to be found only in works of art. A play like Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, Hagstrum argues, would have meant nothing to its audience "had not the *oikos* [the Greek household] been a place much desired by both men and women." That wives could resort to a sexual strike as a form of political protest implied, in the words Hagstrum borrows from Sir Kenneth Dover, that "the marital relationship was



"Mommy married Daddy because he was the only person she'd ever met."

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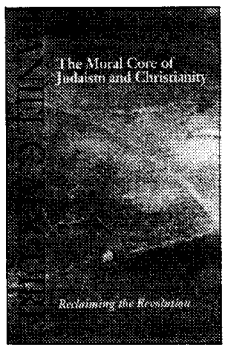
much more important in people's actual lives than we would have inferred simply from our knowledge of the law."

The "erotic ideal"—the union of esteem and sexual desire—deserves to be considered "one of the great achievements of Western culture," according to Hagstrum. "But that union did not come easily," he adds. "Esteem had to be divorced from an all-male contest, and sexuality from the stigma of sin or excess." The first of these developments could have occurred only in a culture willing to countenance the possibility that women (and more particularly wives) were good for something besides reproduction and household labor. As for the second, it received support from the tradition of Christian naturalism, as Hagstrum calls it—the refusal to condemn matter as evil or to equate salvation with a disembodied spirituality—which tempered the fear of sexuality that was also present (even dominant) in Christianity. The central importance of the Incarnation, in Christian doctrine, always stood in the way of Platonizing and gnosticizing influences that might otherwise have aligned Christianity with those religions that aspire to Nirvana, the extinction of desire. In Christianity as well as Judaism, the love of God was often evoked with an abundance of sexual imagery, the effect of which was not only to displace or sublimate sexual desire but also to give it a certain legitimacy.

Hagstrum's open and unapologetic admiration for Western achievements, it hardly needs to be said, goes against the current grain. A man of irenic temper, Hagstrum prefers to emphasize his obligations to other scholars rather than his objections to their work; so it is left mostly to a reviewer to point out that his own work takes issue not merely with prevailing interpretations of the history of love but, at a deeper level, with the whole trend of recent scholarship in the humanities. Although he is clearly sympathetic to feminism, he does not subscribe to the kind of feminism that sees nothing in history except the eternal oppression of women and swallows up all distinctions, all cultural variations, in the one all-encompassing, undifferentiated, monolithic category of "patriarchy." Hagstrum's work likewise stands firmly opposed to the cynicism (which runs through so much of the revisionist scholarship on the Renaissance, for example) that seeks to reduce every expression of idealism to the self-interested pursuit of power. Far more worldly than those who aspire to cosmopolitan status by importing their ideas from Paris, he is undismayed by the gap between ideals and reality, often taken to signify the irrelevance of ideals, because he recognizes their power to criticize and even alter reality. His book deals with "our literary and artistic heritage," not with "historical reality as such," but he does not make the current assumption that art has no connection with reality at all or, alternately, that reality represents nothing more than the "social construction" of artists and critics. He rejects the notion that literary works never refer to anything beyond themselves and that it is pointless, therefore, to expect moral instruction from a work of art.

When he refers to art and literature as our "heritage," Hagstrum reduces to a single word everything that distinguishes him from current fashion. He sees the past as a source of moral wisdom, not just as a record of follies presumably outgrown in our more enlightened (if disillusioned) age. He believes in the "ethical imagination," the exercise of which demands that "we respond correctly and historically when we weigh alternatives, suspend easy belief, and project the dynamics of a work of art into a future that reaches out to our own situation." This procedure carries the danger of reading the past too much in the light of present concerns, and Hagstrum does not always avoid it. There are times when his view of history takes on a Whiggish tinge, as when he congratulates Boccaccio for writing stories that are "modern in feeling," deplores the way in which medieval conventions continued, during the Renaissance, to act as a "dragging, traditional chain on...progress," or complains that *The Tempest* (almost alone among Shakespeare's plays in upholding a very orthodox, unimaginative view of marriage) "does not put Shakespeare on the frontier of the emergent." An insistently moralizing criticism, as is well

A moral creed for the next millennium



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by DANIEL C. MAGUIRE, Professor of Ethics, Marquette University

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known, can interfere with our willingness to take imaginative works on their own terms. Thus Hagstrum misses the satiric intent behind Boccaccio's depiction of the conventional marriage between ill-assorted couples and makes him out to be a reformer instead, the author of an "attack" on the institution of arranged marriage. Admirers of Boccaccio's artistry are likely to be put off by Hagstrum's observation that the *Decameron*, notwithstanding its "modern" feeling, "falls short of [upholding] a satisfying ethical norm." Yet this ethical interrogation of a text, even if the norm in question is too much defined by the "emergent," is vastly preferable to a style of criticism that reflects ethical judgment as completely beside the point.

Hagstrum's literary history of romantic love, because it seeks ethical guidance from the past and not just a better understanding of our ancestors' foibles, amounts also to a defense of romantic love, written with a heartbreaking awareness that lifelong marriage no longer serves as the standard to which erotic practice ought to aspire. Not only marriage but romantic love itself has fallen out of favor. Love at first sight, we are told again and again, provides a shaky basis for marriage. Shared hobbies and tastes, a mutual commitment to compromise, and a willingness to admit that things never stay the same are more likely to endure when passion cools. Lovers should not demand too much of each other. They must allow for the possibility that one of them will probably outgrow the other. To expect fidelity, permanence, undying attachment is to court disappointment. Friendship, homosexual or heterosexual, seems more reliable to us than love, just because it is less demanding and intense. Friendship easily coexists with sex (these days, at least with safe sex) but not with Eros, the "decoration of sexual impulse by art and thought." We like our sexual impulse unadorned, put securely in its place among the "facts of life."

Sex with us is a science, while art and thought have tuned to other themes, including the inevitable misunderstandings between men and women, their essential incompatibility, the instability of all attachments, and the unreliability of everything in the world except sharp, small, immediate, and more or less interchangeable pleasures.

Even the "joy of sex" is now shadowed by AIDS. The sense of sexuality as a dangerous, dark, and unpredictable presence in human life—all the more so in its "decorated" forms—has returned to us in full force. The idea that anything so disruptive could lead to lasting relationships—that Eros could be a stabilizing, let alone a civilizing influence—strikes us as a consummate piece of mystification. One hears talk, more wistful than ironic, about the wisdom of arranged marriages—all in all, it is said, a better solution than romance to the intractable problem of male-female union.

To explain the twentieth-century revulsion against romantic love lies beyond the scope of Hagstrum's enterprise, already ambitious enough without this added burden. The hint of an explanation, however, lies in his very formulation of the romantic ideal. The elaboration of the sexual impulse in works of art, he observes, makes us "understand that the passion aroused early and mysteriously carries over into a calm and fruitful married life." Elsewhere he speaks of the "notion that suddenly and mysteriously induced erotic love...brings long satisfactions to the couple and also to most of those who witness its formation and wish it well." It is precisely the belief that a "sudden, overwhelming attraction" establishes "unshakable bonds" that the modern mind (or is it the postmodern mind?) finds so shocking. The assertion that this process operates "mysteriously," far from reassuring us, seems to clinch the case against romantic love. We dislike a mystery. We crave what we can control—even if the price we pay for control is drastic shrinkage of our imaginative and emotional horizon. □

MAKING HUMANS MOUSY

ANATOMY OF LOVE
Helen E. Fisher
W.W. Norton & Co., $22.95, 431 pp.

Dennis O'Brien

If you like Walt Disney movies, you will love Helen Fisher's *Anatomy of Love*. In Uncle Walt's World, bad foxes lead innocent youth astray, crickets give moral advice, and candelabra pontificate on etiquette. In Helen Fisher's world, all sorts of animals display all sorts of wonderful personal traits from longing to loyalty to love. Reading her book is like one of those "True Life Adventures" in which the kindly deer are attacked by the nasty wolves to the accompaniment of dramatic music and a solemn voice-over. Fisher offers us the music and text.

The basic argument of the book is that whatever you might find in human love behavior, from dalliance to divorce, is a replay of animal ancestry. Whether it is Disney making mice human, or Helen Fisher making humans mousy, it all comes to the same delightful mishmash. The advantage for Disney is that Mickey Mouse is clearly a cartoon—and the end credits are considerably shorter than the 118 pages of notes, bibliography, and index that give Fisher's effort the gloss of scientific earnestness.

Like a good cartoon, Fisher's book is fun and full of surprises. In the Balkans some men carry handkerchiefs under their armpits as love tokens. The writing is happily jaunty and disjointed: "Infatuation...is a panoply of intense emotions, roller coastering from high to low, hinged on the pendulum a single being...a mosaic of sensations." No wonder infatuation is such a problem!

The interesting question is why anyone would take Fisher's account seriously, yet we are assured by the book jacket that she received the American Anthropological Association's Distinguished Service

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Award in 1985 and makes numerous radio and TV appearances. E.O. Wilson, the grand guru of sociobiology, blesses her "new explanation of the roots of human marriage, sex, and love." There must be a certain plausibility to this sort of thing in order to get selected by the Book-of-the-Month Club.

Fisher's strategy is virtually invisible to the rapid reader. I call it "the quotation mark displacement dodge." The essential trick is to apply a crucial term in quotation marks. "Bonobos in the San Diego Zoo...always gaze at each other as they 'make love.'" An acute reader will note that "make love" is being used out of its normal usage. A rapid reader, however, will scarcely note the little floating quotes. Before anyone knows it, Presto! the marks disappear and we forget that "love" has been dis-placed. We come to believe that the usage is not "stretched" but literal in very truth.

Fisher says that gorillas have harems. Do they? Male gorillas mate with a stable group of multiple females. Doth multiple mating a harem make? The harems of the great sultans often consisted of over 100 women: wives, *kadins* (who had the status of wives), concubines, and servants. These women were all subject to the control of the sultan's mother and guarded by eunuchs. A harem, in short, is a complex social, legal, and moral structure defined by delicate distinctions between wives, *kadins*, authorities, servants, and the like. With all due respect to gorillas, using "harem" to describe both the seraglio and the pack is like confusing bouillabaisse and bananas because both are food.

The sly quote mark is not confined to specific claims, it infects the basic sense of the argument. Fisher wants to explain the mystery of infatuation. As a strict scientist she offers "some 'reasonable' explanations of emotion." Why is "reasonable" in quotation marks? It seems that even Fisher recognizes how much she is stretching the notion of "reason" in these "explanations."

The explanation of infatuation fails both as an explanation at all and as an explanation of infatuation. Fisher tries a series of explanations from the olfactory to the chemistry of phenylethylamine. Do smells and the limbic system explain infatuation? Fisher's actual argument is a tissue of "perhaps," "this is speculative," "it could explain," "probably," "I think it does." I think it does not. Infatuation by Fisher's own description involves a "mysterious" interest in *just this one*. "My whole world had been transformed. It had a new center and that center was Marilyn," says one of her informants. If infatuation is individualized, then "explanations"—even explanations—by smell won't do. Unless there is a high individuation among Balkan armpits, infatuation should prove to be generic, not individual.

The peculiarity of human love is very much involved in the fact that Marilyn is the center of my world. Not a female in estrus, but this *person*, Marilyn, is what I desire. What Fisher blurs and blots is the very peculiar, indeed unique, human characteristic of being a person, a rational agent who can promise love and marriage. Whatever the fidelity of animal attachments, they are not based on promises and the wayward ape who severs a rela-

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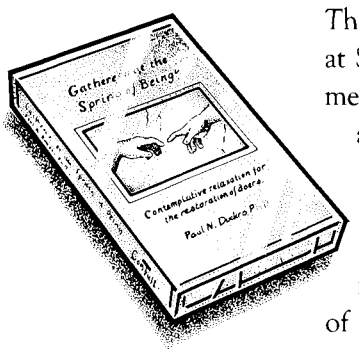

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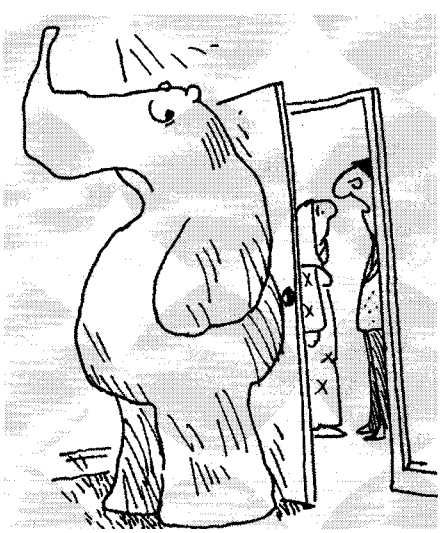
tion is not subject to any moral censure.

Which is, of course, the point of the whole thing: no moral censure. It plays very well on "The Donahue Show." The more that one can slide human "value" (note quotes) into the biological background, the less one has to fuss about thought, choice, and (worst of all) guilt.

Fisher appeals to sociobiology, a science doomed to fail at its purported task. Consider the titillating fuzziness of E.O. Wilson's praise: "...explanation of the *roots* of human *marriage*" (italics added). What exactly is supposed to be explained? My rapid reader may think that it is marriage that will be explained but it turns out it is the *roots* of marriage. Does explaining the root system of the rose explain the rose? Of course human marriage is rooted in biology, but marriage is what has flowered by human choice replete with moral lessons, legal sanctions, and, alas, guilt.

Sociobiology may explain the persistence of a practice but it cannot explain the inherent value in the practice. There is an obvious survival value to getting the right sums in mathematics. 2 + 2 = 4 has greater survival value than 2 + 2 = 5. But as one commentator points out, "We can explain why we should have acquired mathematical understanding; but the explanation does not tell what we have acquired. To understand that we must turn to logic and the foundations of mathematics, which are concerned with reasons, not causes...."



"There's someone else, isn't there, Barbara?"

The anatomy of human love hangs on reason's skeleton of morality and law. Fisher lacks any theory of moral meaning. When humans arrive in chapter 13, they are certainly rational but only in technical terms. Morality is good genetic policy. Human individuals and societies may be stupid if they establish bad moral (genetic) policies, but they could not be regarded as evil. Social Darwinists of the last century argued that war was good genetic policy (it cleansed the gene pool); Fisher argues that peace is a better policy for gene persistence. Either way we are discussing practical options, not moral demands.

Much of Fisher's book is a "good read" as one wanders through the stunning variation of animal and hominid behavior. Why is the animal kingdom so fascinating? Fisher would have us believe that it is because animals act like humans (or vice versa). For whatever it is worth, when humans first emerged from the animal kingdom, they thought better of animals than that. Animals were like gods, not like men. What fascinated our ancient ancestors was that animals hunted, mated, and banded *in silence*. Unlike the gabby new planetary inhabitants who could lie, cheat, and deceive—as well as promise, decree, and praise—animals were ever faithful, ever themselves. "A rose is a rose is a rose." Like gods, animals expressed the "fullness of being."

Moses marks a radical turn toward the strangely human when he stumbles on a God who talks and hands out moral laws. If anyone is puzzled about the popularity of books like Fisher's, it is worth remembering that when Moses showed up with the Ten Commandments, everybody else was busy worshiping a Golden Calf. □

WHEN PERFECTION IS OPENHANDED

SEEING THINGS
Seamus Heaney
Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, $19, 107 pp.

THE NEVER-ENDING STORY
New Poems
Andrew Hudgins
Houghton Mifflin Company, $17.95, 67 pp.

COVENANT
Alan Shapiro
University of Chicago Press, $9.95, 90 pp.

Suzanne Keen

Framed by translations from Virgil and Dante, Seamus Heaney's *Seeing Things* carries the reader on a voyage to re-encounter the metaphors and purposes of journeying. On the cover of the book there is a gold boat, a marvel of survival as well as ancient craft; it comes from a hoard of objects discovered at Broigher, County Derry. It surfaces in "The Biretta" in a sequence of similes:

> that small boat out of the Bronze Age
> Where the oars are needles and the worked gold frail
> As the intact half of a hatched-out shell,
> Refined beyond dross into sheer image.

The reader catches glimpses of the gold vessel throughout this book of lyrics and sequences, but it is Donne's attenuated thread, connecting two souls in "an expansion,/ Like gold to airy thinness beat" that marks the poems most vividly. The two souls belong to father and son, not the lovers of Donne's "A Valediction, Forbidding Mourning." Heaney's elegies relentlessly embark upon mourning, investigate the breach between the dead and the living, and negotiate the difficult return.

Heaney draws and crosses the line that divides father and son—and stretches between them—in "Markings," where the line becomes the sign of the father's genius:

You also loved lines pegged out in

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the garden,
The spade nicking the first straight edge along
The tight white string. Or string stretched perfectly
To mark the outline of a house foundation
...Or the imaginary line straight down
A field of grazing, to be ploughed open
From the rod stuck in one headrig to the rod
Stuck in the other.

The son inherits the father's skill with lines, reminding us of the frequently anthologized early poem, "Digging," in which the poet listens to the sound of his father's spade and takes up a different tool: "Between my finger and my thumb/The squat pen rests./I'll dig with it." In this volume, the poet does not snatch up his father's dropped tools. Rather he seeks to follow the path of the flung pitchfork:

Past its own aim, out to an other side
Where perfection—or nearness to it—is imagined
Not in the aiming but the opening hand."

A sequence of sequences makes up the second part of *Seeing Things*; here Heaney contrasts the plain, clear sentences that let us see the things that he sees, with visions discovered and launched in words from his word-hoard. So poem XXX of "Squarings" begins in the matter-of-fact, "On St. Brigid's Day the new life could be entered/By going through her girdle of straw rope:" and ends with a flash of the gold with which Heaney's poems are wrought: "imagine/ The limp rope fray and flare like wind-borne gleanings/Or an unhindered goldfinch over ploughland."

Andrew Hudgins's third book of poems, *The Never-Ending*, depends upon juxtapositions for its considerable energy. In "Compost: An Ode," the poet celebrates the homely ingredients of the compost heap and the surprising heat they create as they decay: "...In summer, the heap / burns like a stove. It can—almost—hurt you." The colloquial force of that "—almost—" in a poem that also reaches to elegant description ("a leisurely collapsing of/the thing /into its possibilities") conveys the characteristic qualifying of the poet's intervening voice.

"Let me through, I'm a poet!"

Hudgins claims the lyric poet's most venerable traditional forms—prayer, psalm, ode, lamentation, elegy—and deploys them wryly, with qualifications, as his titles suggest: "Praying Drunk"; "Elegy for My Father, Who Is Not Dead"; "The Liar's Psalm." He expresses his self-consciousness about the demands of forms, and the human inability to live up to these expectations in "Praying Drunk":

I'm usually asleep by now the time
for supplication. Requests. As if I'd stayed
up late and called the radio and asked
they play a sentimental song. Embarrassed.

Hudgins's debunking vision insists on seeing things as they appear; his poems based on paintings and images of the life of Christ best demonstrate this attention to detail, as in "Dead Christ," where the reader hesitates and then recognizes the wounds: "And on the pink, scrubbed bottom of each foot/a bee-stung lip pouts daintily." The poet does not hesitate from reporting the effect of such envisioning; the poem concludes, "Most Christs return./But this one's flesh. He isn't coming back."

Finally, Hudgins's poems demonstrate the vitality of metaphor as "a form of praying." In "Two Ember Days in Alabama," blackbirds "fat and glossy as eight balls" eat up the world during Lent, "Building energy/for exodus." The blackbirds attain their full symbolic freight when they betray the observing eye by departing:

They've swelled the barren woods,
loading the unleaved trees like the black fruit
of nothingness. And now they simply leave.
First fall, then winter. Then this long pause. And then
the starting over. And then the never-ending.

Alan Shapiro's *Covenant*, also a third book, makes a remarkable addition to the University of Chicago Press's excellent series, Phoenix Poets. Perhaps because the volumes are considered only at the invitation of the editor, Robert Von Hallberg, and not as the result of a contest judged by different poets each year, this series has the continuity and commitment to individual poets missing from some of the other poetry series.

Shapiro's unflinching poems range from the uncomfortable to the ecstatic to the excruciating. The opening poem, "The Sweepers," demonstrates the poet's attempt to recover the humanity of the anonymous sweepers who cleared the streets to make way for Scipio's approaching army. The writer of the Roman history "doesn't say" who they were or what they thought; the poet fills in the gap with conjectures:

Or were these the masters? the wealthiest? their money,
somehow, having gotten them this far, as yet unharmed?
their fingers blistering as they plied crowbar and boat hook,
dowel and axe, the pain a punishment for the dumb animal
persistence that so easily and thoroughly turned friend and relation,
the whole rich tapestry of customary feeling, law, memory and lore
into mere fill for gullies?

The plenitude of the poet's imagination does not excuse him from the complicity of going along with what the writer has chosen to represent: "Here one turns the page," Shapiro concludes, "and goes on reading." Acting as a warning as well as an invitation, "The Sweepers" cannot pre-

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pare the reader for all the subjects that lie within, but it suggests that motives and responses are not only recoverable but plural. "The Visitation," for instance, narrates in three stanzas the speaker's experience of gridlock. The first stanza looks ahead into the jammed intersection, at the "old guy, honking, honking," and "the tight knot they were trying to untie/by tying tighter, till it was my turn not to let him through." Foreknowledge does not spare the speaker from the assault of the old guy's hatred: "making it my fault he had to lunge out/before me, that my brakes slammed, that I yelled back, asshole,/what's the rush?" The line jerks and surges with the traffic and with the quick shifts in emotion—the speaker feels "good solace" when the old guy gets by.

By far the most harrowing of the poems in this volume, "The Lesson," reconstructs the fascination, curiosity, envy, pride, shame, and memory of a young boy who goes along with a child molester. "For a long time afterward/all I could think of/was the one time/he took me...." The poem opens with understated menace, balanced on the ambiguous "took." Despite the "claw-like" fingers, demonstrating the "fuckyknuckle," a secret pitch, the man in the car might seem to onlookers "a proud father." Yet like "The Sweepers," this poem is preoccupied with the difficulty of identifying father, son, teacher, pupil, lesson: "How would I ever say/ to anyone who he was?" Shapiro handles the recreation of the playground scene, the boys' fascination with Rich in his gold Sting Ray, their giggling "high-pitched ignorant/ unease" at his questions, and the drama of awaiting selection for the transforming "ride" with excruciating clarity. Afterwards, the speaker reflects:

A boy is nowhere
else more boy-like
than in the way he
imagines being a man.
My boyhood ended
there, that day, with nothing
else to take its place.
Now I had no name
for what I was.

The image of impossibility takes its vehicle from the the world of playground games, "red light, green light" and from the adult world of the car:

To try to think it,
say it, was to look
down some vast avenue,
through an infinity of red lights
and not know any
word for green.

The most primary oppositions have been undermined, including innocence and guilt. □

REVIEWERS

CHRISTOPHER LASCH *teaches history at the University of Rochester. His most recent book is* The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics *(Norton).*

DENNIS O'BRIEN *is president of the University of Rochester. He is author of* God and the New Haven Railway *(Beacon).*

SUZANNE KEEN *is an assistant professor of English at Yale University.*

CARL L. BANKSTON III, *whose poetry has appeared in* Commonweal, *lives in New Orleans, Louisiana.*

MOVE OVER, MATHER

AMERICAN CATHOLIC ARTS AND FICTIONS
Paul Giles
Cambridge University Press, $65, 547 pp.

Carl L. Bankston III

In an article in *Commonweal* in November 1991, Paul Giles described Donald Barthelme as "... a fascinating example of the Catholic literary sensibility at work," despite Barthelme's "avowed agnosticism." The writer participated in a Catholic cultural tradition, Giles maintained, through his implicit assumptions about the nature of man, society, and the world and through his choices of allusions and metaphors. Barthelme's Catholicism was not a philosophical system, but a "lurking irrational shadow" of "radical antihumanism."

This article appears, in a much-edited form, in Giles's massive new book on the Catholic tradition in American literature and art. While he had previously cited Bartheleme as an example of how a social context is expressed in the work of a single author, Giles now turns to an examination of the context itself by placing a variety of Catholic writers, filmmakers, and artists in a community of culture that has formed a continual undercurrent to the dominant American ideology of Puritanism and romanticism. Giles offers a description of his subject that is both chronological and thematic. He moves gradually from nineteenth-century American stereotypes of Catholicism, and the appearance of Orestes Brownson as the first characteristically American Catholic writer, to contemporary novelists Mary Gordon and Robert Stone.

The concept of "analogy" is central to Giles's interpretation of the Catholic sensibility. In the Thomist doctrine of *analogica entis*, the universe is represented as a series of intercessionary links between heaven and earth, so that there are no unbridgeable chasms between spirit and matter, between the visible and the invisible. There is no "idealism" in this manner of thinking, since the analogical imagination finds the ideal in earthly substance, as in the mystery of transubstantiation. Since all physical things mirror the divine, analogy knits the world together into an interconnected whole and leads to an acceptance of imperfect, corrupt human nature.

By contrast, Giles argues, the dominant American, Puritan mode of thought is frequently "allegorical." The Puritan separation of God from the world created two separate, closed realms of meaning. Mundane events can have only a figurative and arbitrary relation to divine truth. Because there are no intermediaries between the two realms, each individual is forced to take responsibility for his own spiritual state, replacing obedience to authority with extreme voluntarism. Because

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the mundane is closed off from the sacred, worldly success or failure can become absolute in its own sphere; in the "Protestant Ethic" wealth becomes the indisputable symbol of the elect. Social idealism becomes the faith of those faced with a conspicuous duality of good and evil, who have only to exercise their own wills to remake their society.

Giles argues that even Catholics and Protestants who have abandoned their faiths retain their characteristic sensibilities as matters of style and metaphor. Among Catholics, the principal stylistic division is between converts (such as Orestes Brownson, Allen Tate, Robert Lowell, and Walker Percy) and "cradle Catholics." For the former, Catholicism is self-conscious and theoretical. For the latter, whether continuing believers or apostates, the influence of the church is usually more subtle and subliminal. Giles's chapter on John Berryman and the way in which a religious background can shape secular art in unconscious, unsystematic ways is particularly good. Ideas of guilt and divine grace run through all of Berryman's work and Giles finds elaborate parallels between St. Augustine's *Confessions* and Berryman's intensely confessional *Dream Songs*.

The argument that the Catholic cultural legacy includes the arts of photography and cinema, as well as literature, is important for the author's principal thesis that a secularized version of theological style permeates much modern thought and expression. The iconographic arts of Andy Warhol and Robert Mapplethorpe reveal a Catholic origin in their rejection of romanticism, as well as in their frequent, although irreverent treatment of Catholic subjects. Similarly, the filmmakers John Ford and Robert Altman display an ironic ambivalence toward the cultural myths of Puritan America and a concern with community and ritual that stands in contrast to the idealistic individualism of the mainstream tradition.

The concepts of "analogy" and "allegory" provide Giles with an intriguing basis for constructing ideal types of the Protestant and Catholic mentalities. Nevertheless, while interpreting the work of individual artists as variations of an underlying, *a priori* typology may be an effective way of finding unity in diversity, it creates some problems. First, one occasionally feels that Giles is forcing particular traits into a predetermined theoretical mold. For example, Martin Scorsese's early obsession with being financially successful (a goal one normally associates with the Weberian Protestant Ethic) is taken as the outsider Catholic immigrant's desire for social acceptance and as evidence of an innately conservative belief in "playing by the rules." One wonders how Scorsese's lust for wealth and renown differs from that of Steven Spielberg, who is Jewish.

The fact that Catholicism became prevalent in the United States as a result of the "new immigration" between the Civil War and World War I poses a second problem. Daniel Moynihan has argued that the American system of social stratification along ethnic and religious lines is best understood as a result of the entry of different groups at different points in the nation's historical development. Thus, the "gloomy, stifling conformity" that Giles finds in the works of Dreiser and Farrell may result less from a peculiarly Catholic sense of a world linked by bonds of analogical similitude than from the experiences of a newly arrived industrial working class. It is not necessary to turn to secularized theology to explain why a child of the twentieth-century Chicago slums would have a different perspective from that of the cosseted sages of nineteenth- century New England.

Finally, the author's insistence on the fundamental conservatism and antihumanism implicit in the analogical imagination leads him to underestimate the energy for social reform that has played an important part in American Catholic intellectual life. As a social conservative, the minor writer George V. Higgins (*The Friends of Eddie Coyle*) is presented as an exemplar of Catholic values, while the leftist sympathies of Dreiser, Farrell,

In Memoriam

Thomas M. Martin

Chair, Director of Graduate Programs
Department of Religious Studies

1940-1992

University of Dayton
Dayton, OH 45469-1480

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and others are glossed over. For all of these difficulties, *American Catholic Arts and Fictions* is an ambitious and insightful exploration of how Catholic culture in the United States has created a consistent, though complex, alternative to what Quentin Anderson called the American doctrine of "the imperial self." Readers who once imagined that all Americans are the direct intellectual descendants of Cotton Mather, Emerson, and Whitman will discover the new world of a diverse heritage. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

does concern for defending one's rights provide proof positive of a radically individualist and anti-institutional spirit?

In my view, supporting an institution (whether the military, the priesthood, or any other) does not mean deriving one's personal identity from it or subordinating one's human rights to it; that kind of institutionalism needs a healthy infusion of the "individualistic spirit." Gays and lesbians are simply right to protest a policy that punishes them for what they are, not for doing anything "contrary to good order and discipline."

If I may speak of my own experience in the military—eight years with the Air Force—it taught me that the exclusion of uncloseted homosexuals from the military serves mainly to perpetuate self-serving myths cherished by white heterosexual males to defend their own sense of self-worth. If gays and lesbians can carry out military assignments as well as straight men, what happens to the male mystique of macho superiority?

In his final paragraph, Mr. Carlin acknowledges that institutionalism is not a good enough reason to reject women in the priesthood or gays in the military, but the phrasing of his admission adds new injury: "If your enemy advances a legitimate claim on you, you have no choice but to give him his due, even if he advances the claim from bad motives."

Gays and women are not "the enemy," not even for bishops and generals; they are your sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers, friends, neighbors; in short, human beings deserving of respect. And claiming what you believe is your due is not a "bad" motive. JIM McCREA

From the editors: Other aspects of this issue are discussed in columns by David R. Carlin and John Garvey, pages 8 and 9, respectively, an "Editor's Notebook," page 4, and an article by George M. Anderson, S.J., page 16.

UAW overreaches

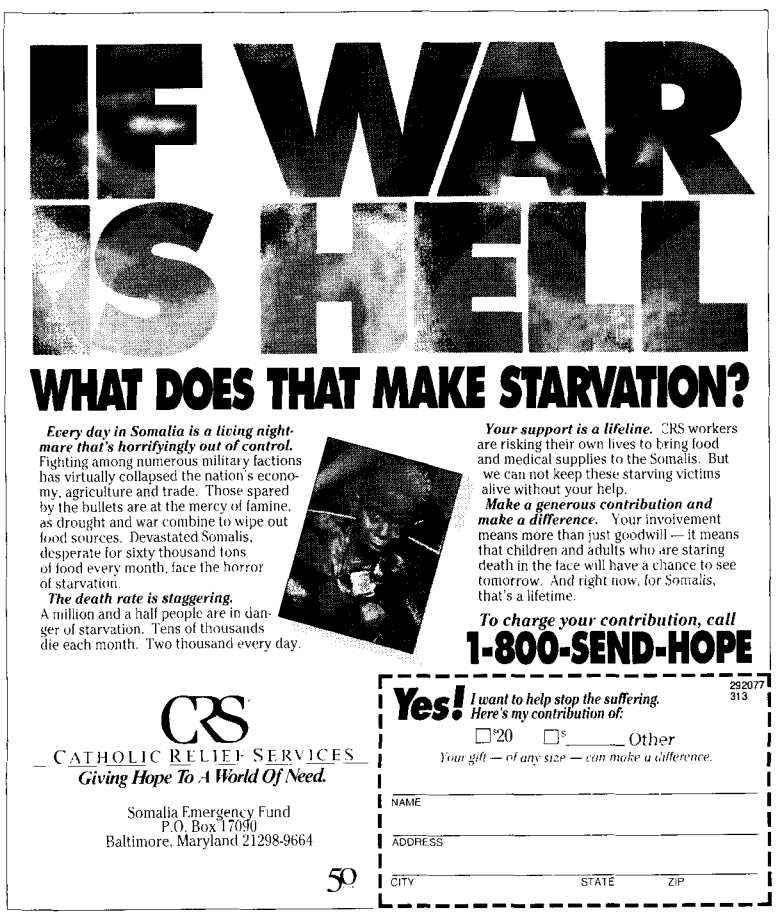
Amarillo, Tex.

To the Editors: I've read numerous articles on the Caterpillar-UAW struggle but none so onesided as Kevin Kelly's "Labor's Metamorphosis" [January 15]. Not once does he mention Komatsu, Caterpillar's prime competitor, which signed a less costly labor agreement than the UAW demanded of Caterpillar. If Caterpillar agreed to the UAW's terms, they would be at a competitive disadvantage with a firm that is fighting them for market share across their product line.

Many corporations that have acceded to the UAW's pattern bargaining have subsequently seen layoffs and declining growth. It makes little sense to bargain for a structure that reduces competitiveness and jobs. Unfortunately, the trade-off of poor worker morale resulting from declining the contract becomes the lesser of two evils.

I understand Caterpillar has invested billions in state-of-the-art manufacturing to prevent losing market share to Komatsu. Only with high-tech investment can American firms compete and pay benchmark wages. American workers would be better served if other large corporations were as aggressive in defending their markets through technology and the jobs it supports.

What is really at stake is an old labor practice. Labor unions, like companies, have to change. Pattern bargaining is a relic of the days when large corporations were cozy with their unions and could pass wage increases on to the consumer. International competition has closed the curtain on that practice. That's the crucial issue facing the UAW, conveniently overlooked by Mr. Kelly JOHN MARMADUKE


IF WAR IS HELL
WHAT DOES THAT MAKE STARVATION?
Every day in Somalia is a living nightmare that's horrifyingly out of control. Fighting among numerous military factions has virtually collapsed the nation's economy, agriculture and trade. Those spared by the bullets are at the mercy of famine, as drought and war combine to wipe out food sources. Devastated Somalis, desperate for sixty thousand tons of food every month, face the horror of starvation.
The death rate is staggering. A million and a half people are in danger of starvation. Tens of thousands die each month. Two thousand every day.
Your support is a lifeline. CRS workers are risking their own lives to bring food and medical supplies to the Somalis. But we can not keep these starving victims alive without your help.
Make a generous contribution and make a difference. Your involvement means more than just goodwill — it means that children and adults who are staring death in the face will have a chance to see tomorrow. And right now, for Somalis, that's a lifetime.
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The author replies:

Wage comparisons between Japanese and U.S. companies are nearly impossible to make, given the different benefits offered and the currency fluctuations. I should know. I tried for months to prove Caterpillar's claim that it was at a cost disadvantage *vis-à-vis* Komatsu. Of course the company made such comparisons impossible by refusing to release its "unit labor cost" data, which would enable a comparison between the productivity of a Cat worker and that of a Komatsu worker, the true test of competitiveness. Most observers believe Cat's work force is more productive, even allowing for higher wages, than Komatsu's. Apart from this, the reason I didn't focus on Komatsu is that it has simply faded as a competitor.

I stand by my position that wages are not the central issue in this dispute. Even Caterpillar's executives largely agree with this. Cat's complaints about pattern bargaining—the process whereby all companies in an industry accept the same union contract—have more to do with management's insistence that it should be free to run the company without union interference.

Finally, to blame labor, or high wages, for the decline of American competitiveness is simply ridiculous. In most companies wages make up less than 15 percent of total costs. Blame the misfortunes of companies like General Motors on bad product and marketing decisions, not the unions. Somehow, I might add, Chrysler managed to make money in 1992 under a "pattern" contract, while GM lost its shirt. KEVIN KELLY

Poor sport

Philadelphia, Pa.

To the Editors: Nothing really new has been contributed to the ban-abortion movement since serious efforts to decriminalize abortion arose in the 1960s. For example, I was a member of a theological study to recommend just that in the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania in 1968—five years *before* the ruling in *Roe* v. *Wade*. Following the national political (and religious) polarization of the last decade, in which recriminalization is the goal, I found it a refreshing laugh to read Robert Hughes's *New Yorker* essay [October 5, 1992] on "Whatizit"—a homunculus?—a spoof upon the lumpy schmoo-like Olympic mascot for 1996.

For Associate Editor Paul Baumann to take that essay apart so seriously ["Fetal Positions," December 4] was poor sportsmanship at best, and, at its worst, yet another apology *Commonweal* seems compelled to make to the men of the Vatican lest Cardinal Ratzinger bring down papal wrath upon you—shades of Father Curran and Archbishop Hunthausen! I write as a friend and longtime subscriber.

To be "prolife" these days is to cherish a zygote. Is that distinguishable from a homunculus—the "little man in the sperm"? To be "prochoice" does *not* mean one is in *favor* of abortion as the *first* option for women. Who is being protected in this irrational war, and who is being victimized? When will love triumph over hate? And, Lord, we do need some humor in the meanwhile! (REV.) JOHN M. SCOTT

The writer is rector of the Episcopal Church at the University of Pennsylvania.

The author replies:

Simply put, I think the Rev. Scott mischaracterizes Hughes's article as a "spoof" and a good laugh. It is also inaccurate to imply that those, like *Commonweal*, who are opposed to *Roe* v. *Wade* want to recriminalize abortion. Equating opposition to current abortion practice—which includes 100,000 late-term abortions each year—with an "irrational" concern for zygotes ignores both the moral arguments and the physical facts surrounding the issue.

Scott is right about the tedious lack of humor surrounding the question. I wonder if he's heard the one about the zygote who turned into a comedian? Probably not. But I have to run—Cardinal Ratzinger is faxing us our next editorial. And then it's back to the dungeon to tighten the thumb screws on Father Curran and Archbishop Hunthausen. Frankly, I'm exhausted. No wonder I've lost my sense of humor.

PAUL BAUMANN

Let priests be womanly

Bay Shore, N.Y.

To the Editors: Like Sally Campbell [Correspondence, January 29], I too experienced a stunning moment when I realized that the priest at the altar was doing the things that women do, but my insight led to a much less politically correct and therefore more challenging and enlightening conclusion: Women, for better or worse, always have access to these functions and feelings; men, to our peril and theirs, are nearly always estranged from them. For women to demand priesthood for themselves is like the prodigal son's good brother demanding a feast; we don't need it, and men do. I am certain our Lord knew this. LINDA A. MORROW

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